

High School Parents®

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Chambersburg Area School District

still make the difference!



Help your teen relieve stress about getting 'perfect' grades

Four out of five (79 percent) high school students say that pressure to get good grades creates problems for them. Nearly half (45 percent) say that pressure is a major problem.

A survey by the Horatio Alger Association found that the pressure to get good grades is the biggest cause of stress for today's teens.

The survey shows that teens are working harder for their grades. The average teen reports spending 8.2 hours a week on homework. About one in five spends more than 10 hours per week.

To reduce this pressure:

- **Let your teen know** that your love does not depend on a straight-A report card. Many teens told the survey that they believed that bringing home a good report card

was the best way to make their parents proud.

- **Be clear about the message** you're sending. Sometimes, teens get the message that parents want good grades at any cost. That can lead them to think that cheating is OK.
- **Have your teen focus** on *doing* her best, not *being* the best. All teens can strive for the first goal.
- **Put pressure about college** in perspective. Yes, it is hard to get into a small number of very select colleges. But there are many more great schools out there. Assure your teen that you'll work together to find a great college.

Source: Horatio Alger Association, "The State of Our Nation's Youth, 2008-2009 (Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, 703-698-9444, www.horatioalger.org).

Experts say teens don't get enough sleep



According to the National Sleep Foundation, teens are exhausted. One in 10 say they never

get a good night's sleep. Studies show that one-fourth of teens fall asleep in school at least once a week. Those tired teens earn lower grades than those who arrive at school better rested.

What can parents do to help teens get the sleep they need?

- **Talk with your teen.** Just as you ask about other health issues, ask whether your teen feels tired all the time.
- **Calm down the bedroom.** Take the computer and the TV out of your teen's bedroom. That will eliminate some of the temptation to stay up later.
- **Encourage him** to go to bed at a reasonable hour. Expect him to keep a regular schedule, getting up at the same time on weekends.
- **Encourage your teen** to take "power naps." Help him find 20 or 30 minutes to sneak in some sleep.

Source: "Sleep Awareness Week Highlights Teens' Sleep Needs," New York Presbyterian Hospital, www.nyp.org/news/health/060329.html.

Encourage your high schooler to be responsible, use time wisely



Using time wisely is one of the best lessons in responsibility that anyone can learn. It will keep your teen from missing deadlines and appointments. It will help him stay up-to-date with his schoolwork. And it will help him lead a smoother, less stressful, life.

To help your teen manage time, have him:

- **Use a planner or calendar.** He should write down everything on his schedule for the week. It's good to check planners or calendars twice a day.
- **Cut down on time wasters.** The phone, TV and computer are usually the biggest offenders. Don't ask your teen to give them up completely. But ask him to come up with ways to limit their use.
- **Say no to things** that will overload him. If he already has homework, soccer practice, babysitting and

chess club, he probably doesn't have time to also be the stage manager for the fall play.

- **Do a little at a time.** Studying 30 minutes each day is much more effective than trying to cram for five or six hours the night before a test.
- **Plan a "don't put it off any longer"** day once a week. Once a week, ask him to work on a task that he has been shoving to the back burner.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, ISBN: 0-684-85609-3 (Fireside, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonandsays.com).

"We learn more by looking for the answer to a question and not finding it than we do from learning the answer itself."

—Lloyd Alexander

Parent involvement remains critical throughout teen years



When teens get to high school, they often act like they don't want their parents around any more. Many parents, who may have been active through elementary and middle school, may be happy to oblige.

But the research is clear: Parent involvement remains critical throughout your teen's school years.

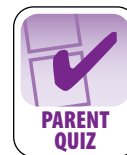
Your involvement in your teen's school sends a powerful message about what you believe. High school students say that when parents are interested in their school, they are more likely to do homework. They will work hard to earn better grades.

What if you don't have time to chair the Booster Club? Luckily, there are other ways to be involved. You should get to know your teen's teachers. Stay in touch when you have questions or concerns. Make sure your teen does homework. Come to school events whenever you can.

Those aren't hard to do. But the payoffs for your teen can be huge. When you stay involved, your teen will do better all through high school.

Source: Evanthis N. Patrikakou, "Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment," *Harvard Family Research Project Research Digest*, September 2004, www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/adolescence.html.

Are you giving your teen the tools to manage money?



Along with the basic skills your teen will learn in school, money management is also a critical life skill. Are you helping your teen manage money wisely? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you give your teen practice managing money?** Does she have an allowance that includes money to use for clothing and school supplies?
- ___ **2. Have you helped your teen create a budget?** It can include money for school lunches and weekend entertainment.
- ___ **3. Do you help your teen set savings goals?** If she wants something, she needs to save until she has enough money for it.
- ___ **4. Have you helped your teen open a bank account?**
- ___ **5. Do you let your teen know** she can't have everything she wants?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your teen learn the basics of money management. For *no* answers, consider trying those ideas.

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Cheating prevention begins at home—talk to your teenager



A recent study found that a startling 95 percent of high school students say they've cheated at least once during their school

career.

The problem is that most teens don't view cheating as a serious offense. Teens are under a lot of pressure to do well, and cheating is a way to lessen some of that pressure. Therefore, anything from plagiarizing a paper to copying someone's homework to using crib notes on a test has become regular behavior.

Some teens don't realize that cheating is dishonest. But it's the same as lying or stealing—they're stealing someone else's work and lying by saying it's theirs. So what can you do to prevent your teen from becoming a habitual cheater?

- **Talk to your teen about cheating.** Explain that even though it may seem like "everybody does it," it is wrong—and your family won't stand for it.
- **Back off the pressure.** Be sure that your high expectations for your teen are not unrealistic. If your teen is resorting to cheating to get an A, explain that you'd rather she do her best and earn a lower grade than to score higher by cheating.
- **Explore the real-life applications** of what your teen is learning. If she realizes that she may use geometry beyond that test on Thursday, she may be more interested in studying and learning rather than cheating.

Source: Joan Oleck, "Most High School Students Admit to Cheating," *School Library Journal*, www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6539855.html.

Prevent prescription drug abuse by being aware, setting limits



It's a fact: Teens today find it easier to get prescription drugs than beer. Almost a quarter of teens say they have a

friend who abuses prescription drugs. And teens obtain nearly half of their illegal pills from their homes or the homes of friends.

Yet the research shows a disconnect—28 percent of teens surveyed named drug and alcohol abuse as their biggest problem, while only 17 percent of parents stated it as one of their top 10 worries about their teens.

Home is where drug abuse prevention should begin. To keep your teen drug-free:

- **Be aware.** Lock up any prescription pills you have around the house. Even if you are sure your

teen would never take them, one of her friends might. Remind your teen that she should never take any pill that wasn't prescribed for her by a doctor.

- **Enjoy family dinners.** Show an interest in your teen's life—talk about school, her friends, what she does for fun. Your teen needs to know you care about her.
- **Set a curfew.** More than half of teens surveyed said they're exposed to drugs or alcohol when they stay out past 10 p.m. on weeknights. Know where your teen is—and who she's with—at all times.

Source: Paul Nyhan, "Teens' drug issues blamed on parental oblivion: Kids say illegal substances as easy as coming home," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/375073_teendrugs15.html.

Q: My son has always been a loner and a free spirit. But lately, his clothes have become more outlandish. He dresses in black and has dyed his hair coal black. He wears black nail polish. "I'm a Goth," he said to me. "It's the style." What I see is a kid who has even fewer friends than he did before, and who looks—well, bizarre. How can I help him?

Questions & Answers

A: Part of being a teenager is trying on different identities. Often, trying on different clothes comes as part of the package.

If you would like your teen to reconsider his style:

1. **Point out** that any extreme style of dress can be off-putting. Ask him, "What would Grandma say if she saw you dressed like that?" or "What would a potential employer say if you walked in dressed like that?"
2. **Try to negotiate** with your son. Will he agree to cut back on the black, wearing one black thing at a time? Would he consider growing his hair back in its natural color?

It is hard to see your son turn into a person that people avoid on the street. Still, it's not his clothes that should worry you the most. It's his isolation from other kids his age.

So try to encourage him to spend time with others. And watch for signs that he may be suffering from depression.

Talk with his teachers, too. Ask them about the school dress code and if they think you should be concerned about your son.

In the end, the isolation will be more harmful than a pair of ugly jeans or a bad hairstyle.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Reading

Strategies can improve reading comprehension



It can be challenging for teens to remember what they have read for school. More difficult textbooks and higher-

level novels can cause teens to throw up their hands in frustration.

Help your teen remember what he's read for class with these reading comprehension strategies:

- **Use a "Story Map."** If your teen is reading a novel, have him write the title at the top of a sheet of paper. Then have him draw a box for each chapter, writing the chapter name at the top of the box. He should draw a picture, write a few words or write a statement that will help him remember the main idea and events of that chapter.

He can also try this for textbooks by replacing the novel title with the textbook chapter title, and the chapter names with section headings.

- **Make a "Knowledge Chart."** Have your teen fold a piece of lined paper in half, so he has two columns. Label the left-hand column "Prior Knowledge" and the right-hand column "New Knowledge." Before reading, he can fill in the left-hand column with facts he already knows about the topic of the chapter. Afterwards, he can fill in the right-hand column with new information he has gained from reading the chapter.

Source: Kathie Steele, "Four Reading Strategies for High School Students," LitSite Alaska, <http://litsite.alaska.edu/workbooks/readingstrategies.html>.

Instant messaging may slow down your teen's reading

If you've been telling your teen you're concerned about the time he spends sending instant messages to his friends while studying, you might now say "TYS" (told you so).

New research shows that teens who IM their friends take nearly twice as long to complete a reading passage as those who don't.

Researchers gave three groups of students a passage to read. One group read it without any interruptions. A second group answered instant messages and then did their reading. The last group answered instant messages as they were reading.

The results? The third group took nearly 15 minutes longer to read the same passage. That was nearly 50 percent longer than the other groups.

Teens who IM may think they're multitasking. But they're really just



wasting time. "They will actually need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task," says researcher Laura Bowman.

So make sure your teen puts away his cell phone while he's reading. He'll actually have more time to IM friends once his homework is finished.

Source: Debra Viadero, "Instant Messaging Found to Slow Students' Reading," Education Week, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/08/27/01im.h28.html.

Help your teenager *want* to read by appealing to interests



With homework, sports, jobs and friends, it's no wonder teens think they're too busy to read.

Rather than nagging your teen, offer her some motivation. Reading can help her:

- **See the world.** Your teen can read about fascinating places she may like to visit one day.
- **Escape.** Sitting down to read can be a wonderful escape from the daily grind of teenage life.

- **Find a cause.** Your teen can read more about issues that interest her.
- **Become an expert.** If your teen has a passion for decorating, she can pick up a book and read about current trends, styles and techniques.
- **Use her brains.** There is nothing like a great mystery book to get your teen thinking.

Source: "Teenagers and Reading," Reading is Fundamental, www.rif.org/parents/articles/teens.msp.