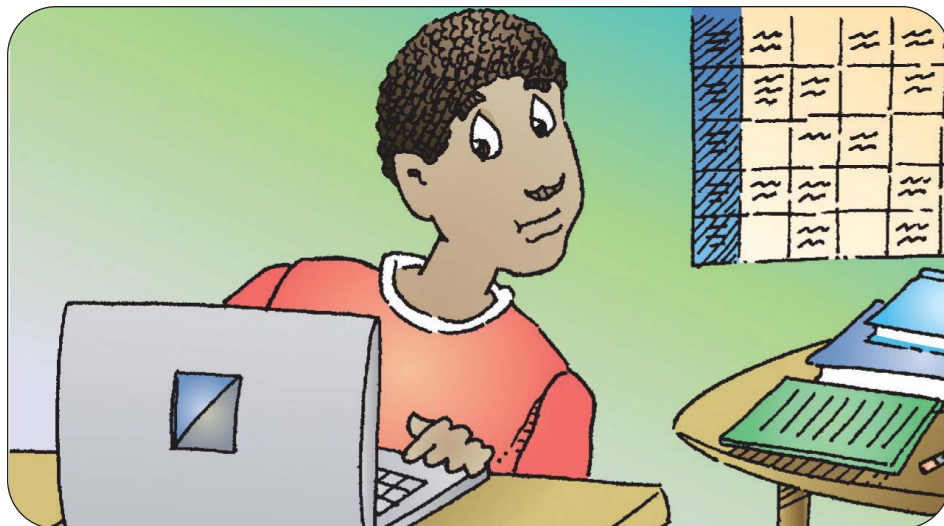


High School Parents[®]

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Chambersburg Area School District

still make the difference!



Experts say teen brains may be wired for power struggles

You are determined that your teen will do his homework right now. He is equally determined to spend another 30 minutes on the computer.

Sound familiar? Teens and parents regularly find themselves locked in power struggles. Recent brain research suggests that these power struggles may actually be the result of the way teens' brains develop.

An area of the brain known as the *prefrontal cortex* acts as the brain's CEO. It is the area of the brain that helps adults regulate their behavior. An adult would think, "If I say that to my boss, I'm likely to get fired. Maybe I'd better keep that thought to myself." But this area of the brain develops late—so most teens lack

that ability to regulate their behavior.

Researcher David Walsh, author of *Why Do They Act That Way: A Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, says, "The fact is that the teenage brain is built for power struggles."

So what does that mean for you? Avoid power struggles when you can. You don't have to give in on everything, of course. But look for ways to involve your teen in decisions. For example, asking, "When can you do your homework so we can go to Grandma's tonight?" may eliminate a fight—and still get the homework finished.

Source: Andrew Trotter, "Brain Research Invoked to Explain Teens' Behavior," *Education Week*, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/01/12/18research.h24.html.

Is your teen at risk of dropping out of school?



Could your teen be at risk of dropping out of school? Here are four warning signs of trouble:

1. **Absences.** Students who miss more than five days in a single marking period often fall behind in their class work. They feel frustrated and sometimes decide to give up.
2. **Poor grades in core subjects.** If your teen is failing in math, science, English or social studies, she may have to repeat a grade.
3. **Being held back.** Teens who are held back often drop out rather than finish high school.
4. **Lack of engagement** in class, including behavioral problems. Teens who never have homework, or who seem to be in constant trouble, may end up dropping out.

If you recognize any of these warning signs in your teen, contact the school right away. Make a plan to help get your teen back on track to graduate.

Source: "Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions," National High School Center, www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf.

Find out how friends, television, & Internet influence your teen



With teenagers, it's important to keep discipline firm, fair and consistent. Stay *firm* by sticking to the rules you've set. Review your rules to make sure that they're *fair*—for example, a 7 p.m. curfew on weekends might be a little unfair for a teen. And maintain *consistency*—your teen will only follow rules you enforce with the same consequences every time.

But it's also important to keep in mind that even though you have a big impact on your teen's life, you aren't the only one influencing him and his behavior. Monitor outside influences that affect your teen, like:

- **Friends.** Try to get to know your teen's friends—and their families. Allow your teen to invite friends over occasionally. Ask your teen what he and his friends do for fun.

- **Television.** What shows does your teen watch? Watch some of your teen's favorite shows with him, and use them as a starting point for a conversation. Do they promote your family's values? Ask him why he likes the shows.
- **Internet.** Ask your teen what websites he likes to visit and take a look at them. Talk to him about the people he "chats" with online. Does he have an online journal or a blog? Remind your teen that anything he puts on the Web is public knowledge.

"The best inheritance a parent can give his children is a few minutes of his time each day."

—Orlando A. Battista

Bring back family dinners to reconnect with your teenager



Between your teen's homework, sports practices and work and your work, chores and errands, it may seem like there's no way you can fit in

time to spend with your teen. But no matter how busy you are, both you and your teen still have to eat!

Designate at least one night a week "Family Dinner Night." Family dinners help strengthen parent-teen relationships, teach teens good eating habits, and are instrumental in preventing substance abuse.

To make the most of dinner with your teen:

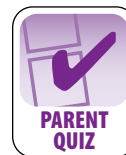
- **Turn off the phones.** That's what voicemail is for. Use this as an

opportunity to focus on your teen without any distractions.

- **Ask your teen specific questions.** Show her that you're interested in what she has to say. Don't interrupt her when she's speaking.
- **Talk about your own day.** Ask your teen for her opinion.
- **Keep it fun.** Try to avoid topics that could lead to arguing. Consider letting your teen choose what to eat. Or have her help you cook the meal—she'll learn an important life skill, and you'll squeeze in some extra time together.

Source: "Get Involved: The Importance of Family Mealtime," Family Guide: Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy & Drug Free, <http://family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx>.

Are you helping your teen avoid the senior slump?



Ask any teacher and you'll learn that "senior slump" affects most seniors. They don't want to study. They don't want to come to class on time. In fact, they don't want to come to class at all!

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen avoid the senior slump:

- ___ **1. Have you talked with your teen** about why his grades can't drop too much? Colleges can (and do) take back their offers of admission!
- ___ **2. Are you making sure** your child's attendance doesn't slip?
- ___ **3. Have you planned** some fun senior activities with other parents that will give your child a reason to want to stay active?
- ___ **4. Are you giving your child** a chance to have adult experiences—interning in an office, volunteering?
- ___ **5. Are you trying to relax** and enjoy your teen? In a few months, he may not be living with you.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your teen stay focused his senior year. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Encourage your teen to use values when making decisions



These are the years when your teen is starting to think about the values she'll use to guide her through her life. That

means she's going to do some questioning—including questioning you. The way you respond to questions can help your teen through this important decision-making process.

You can help your teen clarify her values as she makes decisions if you:

- **Are available.** Let your teen know that she can always come to you to talk about her thoughts and ask questions.
- **Ask questions.** Teens often aren't sure what they think. Try to ask questions without coming across as a prosecuting attorney! "What

makes you say that?" "Can you see the other side of that issue?"

- **Expect your teen** to point out inconsistencies in your own actions. If you talk about healthy living, but still smoke, your teen is going to point it out!
- **Decide which values** are too important for compromise. You shouldn't compromise on issues of safety and health. However, try to worry less about other issues where you don't feel so strongly. (Can you live with her decision to become a vegetarian? Could you tolerate a pierced nose?)

Source: Harriet Heath, *Using Your Values to Raise Your Child to Be an Adult You Admire*, ISBN: 1-884-73436-7 (Parenting Press, 1-800-992-6657, www.parentingpress.com).

Discuss the important facts about bullying with your teen



Bullying was once looked at as "part of growing up"—a sort of initiation ritual that taught kids that life wasn't always fair.

But bullying among teens has become a huge problem. It can affect students' attendance, schoolwork and their mental and physical health.

Bullying can be:

- **Physical.** Physical bullying ranges from shoving or tripping to punching, hitting or even sexual assault.
- **Verbal.** Verbal bullying includes taunting, teasing and cyberbullying—posting insults or sending cruel messages via the Internet.
- **Psychological.** Psychological bullying occurs when a teen is gossiped about or purposely excluded from a group.

Here's what you can do:

- **Talk to your teen** about bullying. Most teens have experienced bullying, whether as the bully, the victim or a witness.
- **Stress to your teen** that if any bullying situation seems likely to escalate to physical danger, he should report it immediately to you, a teacher or the principal.
- **Tell your teen** to avoid being alone if he is the victim of a bully. Being part of a group may discourage a bully from attacking. If the bully still confronts him, he should ignore the bully and walk away.
- **Encourage your teen** to speak out against bullying. He can join his school's anti-violence program or start one.

Source: "Dealing With Bullying," TeensHealth, http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/bullies.html.

Q: I have a daughter in high school. She's a nice kid, but these days, a parent can't be too careful. I am wondering if I should do more monitoring. Should I check the computer to see what sites she visits? Should I look at her pages on social networking sites? Should I put GPS technology on her phone?

Questions & Answers

A: There are lots of tools available to parents these days. But there's something important to remember—and that's the fine line between keeping track of your teen and spying on her.

You can respect your teen's privacy and keep her safe at the same time. To make sure she steers clear of trouble, you should:

- **Keep the computer** where you can see it. Ask your teen to show you her MySpace or Facebook page. Let her know if you don't like what you see. Wander by when she's online.
- **Build a parent network.** Get to know the parents of your teen's friends. Always call before she goes to a party to make sure an adult will be present and that no alcohol will be served.
- **Set rules about using the car**—and about riding in cars. Make sure your teen knows she can always call you to come get her, with no questions asked.
- **Talk with your teen.** It is the best way to keep track of your child. Spend time alone with her—go out for ice cream, take a walk or do something else you both enjoy. One-on-one talks will help you build a strong relationship. And that will work far better than the latest gadget.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Test Success

Share strategies for math success with your teen



It can be difficult to help teens study for higher level math tests. So remind your teen that math is about more

than just calculations—it's about finding patterns and using strategies to solve problems.

Simple techniques can help your teen do better in math—and like it more. Encourage your teen to:

- **Estimate.** “Educated guesses” are an important way to arrive at more precise answers. If your teen is answering a multiple choice question, estimation may help him eliminate some of the choices right off the bat.
- **Compare.** If your teen comes across a new problem, he should try to compare it to old problems that he has solved. What is similar? Is there a formula he could try?
- **Draw.** It can be easier for visual learners to draw a picture of what the problem is asking. Then your teen can “see” how he needs to go about solving it.
- **Write.** Your teen can write out the problem as a word problem. It may also help him to write out exactly what a complicated formula is saying in words and numbers.
- **Reverse.** Solving problems backwards is a good way for your teen to check his work. Suggest that he use time at the end of a test to do this.

Source: Ron Fry, *Ace Any Test*, ISBN: 1-4018-8912-3 (Delmar Cengage Learning, 1-800-354-9706, www.cengage.com/delmar).

Encourage your teenager to physically prepare for tests

Your teen can (and should) study for days leading up to a big test—but she's not truly ready until she prepares her body for the test as well as her mind.

How can she do that? Share these test preparation tips with your teen:

- **Avoid pulling an all-nighter.** Your brain works best when it's well-rested. Schedule your studying in advance so that you can get at least six hours of sleep the night before a test.
- **Set an alarm clock.** Set a backup alarm, too, if you're concerned you may oversleep.
- **Eat breakfast.** Food fuels your body and your mind, giving you energy and helping you focus. Avoid a big meal, which could make you groggy. Try something



like a bagel with peanut butter and a piece of fruit.

- **Show up early.** Allow yourself five minutes before the test begins to get settled—get out your pen, pencil, calculator, etc. and take a few deep breaths.

Source: “Test Preparation Tips,” TestTakingTips.com, www.testtakingtips.com/test/genpre.htm.

Encourage your teen to study & create sample test questions



Your teen can get a better idea of how well he knows material by testing himself. With some guidelines, he can learn to pick out key ideas and quiz himself on them. He will probably find that many of the same types of questions will be on the real test.

Have your teen:

- **Look for important ideas.** What is the main point of the chapter? What was the conclusion of the teacher's last lecture? These are concepts you can be sure the teacher will want your teen to understand.

- **Review the facts.** A certain number of questions will likely be on straight facts. For example, if your teen is studying English kings, he may quiz himself on the names of the wives of King Henry the Eighth.
- **Pose questions** that make him think critically about the facts. What role did the church play in shaping the history of the Tudor period? Does the church still influence history today?

Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, “How to Predict Test Questions,” About.com, <http://teenadvice.about.com/library/weekly/aa030501a.htm>.