

Positive Parenting Tips: Childhood & Adolescence



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As children grow, they experience physical, mental, social, and emotional changes. Learning about each of these stages can help prepare you for the challenges and opportunities of parenting teenagers.

Middle Childhood (6-8 years old)

By this time, most children can dress themselves, catch a ball, tie their shoes, and begin developing independence from the family. They start school and come into regular contact with the world. You may see children show more concern for others, be able to describe experiences, and talk about thoughts and feelings.

What You Can Do...

- Talk with your child about school, friends, respect, and things they look forward to in the future.
- Help your child set achievable goals.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Be clear about what behavior is OK and not OK.
- Get involved with your child's school.
- Do fun things together as a family, such as playing games and going to events.

Middle Childhood (9-11 years old)

During later childhood, friendships become more important, and skills and confidence develop. Your child may experience more peer pressure and face academic challenges at school. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence.

What You Can Do...

- Talk with your child about puberty.
- Involve your child in household tasks.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong.

Early Adolescence (12-14 years old)

This time consists of many physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. Hormones change as puberty begins. Your child might be worried about these changes and how others see him. Your child might experience moodiness and show less affection toward parents. Some teens may feel sad or depressed or develop eating problems.

What You Can Do...

- Be direct and honest with your teen about sensitive subjects like alcohol, drugs, smoking, and sex.
- Encourage your teen to exercise.
- Have meals as a family.
- Show an interest in your teenager's school life.
- Respect your teenager's opinions, thoughts and feelings.

Middle Adolescence (15-17 years old)

By this time, most girls will be physically mature and boys might still be maturing. During this phase of development, your teen is developing his unique personality and opinions. Many teens start working as they prepare for more independence and responsibility. They often have increased interest in the opposite sex, decreased conflict with parents, and a deeper capacity for more intimate relationships.

What You Can Do...

- Talk with your teen about their concerns and pay attention to changes in behavior.
- Show affection and compliment your teen.
- Respect your teen's need for privacy.
- Encourage your teen to get enough sleep and exercise.
- Help your teen plan ahead for difficult or uncomfortable situations, such as being offered a ride from someone who has been drinking.

For more information on parenting, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/parents/>