

Marriage & Family

Staying Involved in Your Teen's Life

Research has shown that an effective parenting style employs a reasonable amount of control and consistency, coupled with parental warmth and support.

- a. This type of parenting has been associated with positive outcomes in children. Problematic parent-child relationships are characterized by low levels of parental acceptance and control. One of the factors contributing to the delinquency of teens is insufficient monitoring by parents.
 - b. Monitoring means keeping track of your adolescent. You must be able to answer these four questions at all times: 1) Who is your teen with? 2) Where is he or she? 3) What is he or she doing? and 4) When will he or she be home?
 - c. How can you know the answers to those four questions without interviewing your teen every time he or she walks out the door?
1. Talk with your teen.
 - a. Monitoring means being involved in your teen's life.
 - b. It includes being an interested, active listener. Just by listening to the account of your adolescent's day, you can show him that you genuinely care about what happens to him.
 - c. It may only take 15 minutes a day of your undivided attention to learn about your adolescent's daily events.
 - d. Listen carefully. What classes does she like? How are things going with his friends? What problems is she having?
 2. Manage your teen's freedom.
 - a. Adolescence is a time when youth want more freedom to spread their wings. □
 - b. As teens learn the process of managing freedom, parents need to monitor their progress.
 - Adolescents should earn their right to more freedom. With freedom comes the responsibility to endure the consequences of choices.
 - As teens demonstrate responsibility at one level of freedom, parents can help them move to the next level by giving a little more freedom.
 - Before your adolescent can stay home alone during the weekend, you may want to have some practice runs during the week.
 - If your adolescent can handle shorter periods of time, such as one evening alone, then he or she may be ready to move to the next level.
 - Permissive parenting has been found to be associated with behavior problems. Studies have shown that it is better to give too little freedom than too much.
 3. Set clear guidelines.

- a. Even though they can handle more responsible than younger children, teens still need some boundaries and limits.
 - b. it is important that teens know exactly what is expected of them.
 - c. After discussing the rules, you may even want to write them down to avoid discrepancy over what was said.
4. Stay in touch with your teen.
 - a. If your children are supposed to be home at a certain time, plan to be home at the same time. If you can't be there, call to check on them or have a trusted neighbor check on them.
 - b. Unsupervised children are less likely to get into trouble if parents keep in touch with them.
 5. Get your teen involved in adult-supervised activities.
 - a. Find out what school and community resources are available.
 - b. You might check into organized sports, youth organizations, or after-school programs. Make your home available and inviting to your teen and his or her friends. It is easier to keep track of your children when they are home.
 6. Set a good example.
 - a. When you go out, let your children know where you are going, how long you'll be gone, and a number where they may reach you.
 - b. This provides an excellent role model of considerate behavior.
 7. Keep a family calendar.
 - a. Have a space where all family members can write down their meetings, appointments, and activities.
 - b. This helps family members keep track of one another; it also provides a form of communication.
 8. Talk with your teen's teachers: Find out how classes are going, and what problems your teen might be having.
 9. Meet your teen's friends.
 - a. Much of your teen's behavior will be influenced by his or her peer group.
 - b. Studies have shown that adolescents who have a lot of unsupervised time on their hands are at risk for developing deviant peer groups. Under the influence of deviant peers, your teen could develop a variety of problem behaviors.
 - c. Get to know your child's friends; better yet, get to know the parents of your child's friends. Both are a valuable source of information.