



RECAPTURING THE VISION

Parenting Through Developmental Change¹

It's a cliché that teenagers are moody. But it is a developmental fact that your child's adolescent years are a crucial stage of identity formation. Rebellion and resistance can often accompany this stage of development as teens struggle to assert their independence. Teenagers question their parents' ideas. They no longer think their parents have all the answers. Sometimes teenagers are arrogant. They complain that their parents are “old fashioned,” or “don't know what what's going on.” When your child reaches adolescence, you must develop new parenting skills.

- **Take cues from your teen.** Probably the most difficult task will be adjusting to your teenager's unpredictable personality. One minute you are dealing with a child and the next, with a young adult. Many times you will have to “play it by ear,” even though this is hard to do. Remember that you know your offspring best. You have a good idea of what he or she can handle and what his or her behavior means.
- **Give teenagers clear rules.** Adolescents need to know what to expect and need your help in setting reasonable limits. They may resent or test these limits, but don't be afraid to insist on behavior that reflects your values. At the same time, respect your teenager's feelings and opinions by being consistent and willing to discuss the reasons for your decisions.
- **Stay calm.** Your teenager is no longer a child and doesn't want to be treated like one. However, you may hear some strange, strong statements. Remember that it's normal for teenagers to test authority. Don't get defensive or begin a shouting match. Punishment usually doesn't help your teenager develop self-control. Discuss feelings about the situation with your teen and work out mutually acceptable standards—or at least agree to disagree.
- **Accept adolescent behavior.** Sometimes teenagers are moody, restless, critical, and self-centered. Although this may be hard to tolerate, it reflects the inner turmoil that is part of growing up. You can accept your teen's behavior without approving of it.

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- **Give teenagers **privacy**.** You have the right to know where your teenager is, but teenagers also need lives of their own. Sometimes it is hard to know where to draw the line. Don't expect to know every detail. Respecting your teen's right to privacy shows trust and indicates that you recognize your teenager's independence.
- **Be supportive and encourage **independence**.** Teenagers are moving into the "real world," and they need to make decisions about their lives when possible. However, they also need your help and encouragement.
- **Allow your teen to take **responsibility** and make choices.** Try not to criticize a mistake or place blame. When your child handles responsibility well, pay compliments and gradually give more opportunities.

You cannot meet the challenge of teen years with the same qualities you used in the past but take heart: patience, love, skill, and a sense of humor will see you through.

1 Revised by Jacqueline Del Rosario, ReCapturing the Vision. Information in this publication is based on the following publications: Helping Youth Decide. National Association of State Boards of Education. "On the Run" newsletter from University of Missouri-Columbia Extension; Extension Services of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. Ronald A Brown, Director (rev. 1M-8-00).

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Parent Assessment

How Well Do you Know Your Child?

Knowing your child is an important factor in parenting. As your children grow and change, the way you relate and communicate with them will also have to change. During the teenage years your child is going through a lot, and sometimes it will be difficult to even recognize them. This is when it is important to engage in conversation and intently listen to what they tell you. Open conversation will clue you in to the adult your child is becoming.

1. What are your child's likes and dislikes?

2. What are your child's fears?

3. What make them uncomfortable?

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4. What make your child angry?

5. What makes your child sad?

6. What makes you child happy?

7. What are your child's dreams, goals, hopes?
