

Preparing for Adolescence - Center for Parent and Teen Communication

Early Preparation

It's never too early to think about your child's adolescence. Seriously?!? Yes, seriously. Strong families and open communication don't suddenly materialize when children reach adolescence. We build the foundation for our families to be safe, secure, and loving places *early* in childhood. So, even if your child is not yet a tween or teen, now is *exactly* the right time to start preparing.

Adolescence is a time of [rapid development](#) rivaled only by early childhood. When you notice the miracles of development in your toddlers and children, you'll remain enthralled by the changes of adolescence and approach this period with the [appreciation](#) it deserves.

The sooner you begin embracing [balanced parenting](#) strategies, fostering [open communication](#), and developing your child's [resilience](#), the more effective guide you'll be as your child journeys through adolescence and into the adult years.

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11 Ways to Prepare for Adolescence

1) Model

Parents are the reflection in their children's eyes. As young people explore the possibilities of what it means to be an adult, they look at us as role models. [24-hours-a-day](#). Their eyes are open starting at a very young age.

2) Take Care of Yourself

Young people rely on their parents for support. We can only give it if we remain strong ourselves. It is a [strategic act of parenting](#) to take care of ourselves, surround ourselves with meaningful relationships, and live a full rich life. Too many people fall into the trap, early in their children's lives, of believing self-care is selfish. Our children [want us to be happy](#) – they feel that way even when they are toddlers requiring every ounce of energy. Invest early in yourself . . . for you . . . and for them.

3) Listen Well

Families that know how to [respectfully listen](#) to one another create safe and secure settings for each person to clarify their values and make wise thoughtful decisions. It's never too early to learn that real listening has to be an intentional and thoughtful act.

4) Build Character

Young people with character – who choose to do the right thing even when no one is watching – have what it takes to become adults with a sense of [meaning and purpose](#). Noticing all that is good and right in our children – things we see early on – is the most effective strategy to reinforce character strengths. It is never too early to recognize and build on our children's strengths, so start taking note now (and remember them for later!!!).

5) Be a Balanced Parent

Parents who use a [balanced style](#) in which they express warmth and make expectations clear, raise children who are more successful at school, have fewer behavioral problems, and are emotionally healthier. The sooner parents begin moving towards this style the better.

Are you a Balanced Parent?

6) Teach Through Discipline

[Discipline means to teach or to guide](#). In a loving way. It does not mean to punish or control. Therefore, it only counts if young people learn from how we discipline. When we reinforce safe and smart behaviors early on, they'll become a force of habit. It's much better than picking up the pieces later.

7) Hold High Expectations

Young people rise to our expectations. It isn't about grades, trophies, or scores. It's about being good people, their best selves. When young people don't get positive reinforcement they wonder, "Will I be noticed if I am bad?" It is never too early to [catch your kid being good](#).

8) Embrace Failure

Successful people learn from their mistakes. They see [failure as an opportunity for growth](#), rather than as a source of shame. When we teach young children they can pick themselves up, they will believe throughout their lives that it is the recovery and improvement that define them.

9) Teach Coping Strategies

Most of the behaviors we worry about in adolescence serve as [coping strategies](#) to manage discomfort. Telling kids what not to do doesn't work. What works is developing a wide range of positive coping strategies to successfully manage stress. Positive coping strategies can be developed in early childhood, and they'll serve as tools teens can use later.

10) Teach Them About Friendship

Peers can either positively or negatively affect how teens behave. One of the most effective ways to protect teens is to prepare them to [successfully navigate peer pressure](#). Early in life, children can learn how to choose

friends that bring out the best in them.

11) Be Their Guide

Our goal is to raise secure, independent young adults that *choose* to be [interdependent](#) with us throughout their adult lives. Healthy *interdependence* means they'll come back to us — for advice, support, guidance — even as they venture out on their own. In adolescence, this means not controlling them, but guiding them towards wise choices. The sooner our children view us as lifelong guides, the better.

Right on Time

It's not too soon to begin preparing for the kind of relationship that will strengthen your family now, through adolescence, and into adulthood.

It's also not too late. In fact, it is NEVER too late to invest in healthy, strong, and connected families.