



## Teen Challenges

First, teenagers need respect from adults. Take them seriously as mature, unique people equal to adults in their worth and dignity. Acknowledge that some of the ways you've interacted with them in the past need to change because of the amazing array of changes in their lives. Treat teens the way you expect to be treated. When they've done a good job, tell them so.

Second, teenagers need to take responsibility for themselves. Provide opportunities for teens to choose and make decisions on their own and involve them in decisions about rules. Also, be clear about the difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment focuses on what's wrong; discipline emphasizes what needs to be done right in the future.

Third, teenagers need to share beliefs and opinions and form their own values. One of the most important things any adult can do to help teenagers form healthy values is to listen to the things they have to say.

Next, teenagers need to experiment and take healthy risks; both are a normal part of growing up. Instead of criticizing or insulting teenagers for their tastes, back off and give them room to experiment and try new things. However, know when to intervene and be alert to warning signs that indicate your teenager has moved from healthy into harmful risk-taking.

Fifth, teenagers need to interact with peers. This is essential for them to learn how to get along with others. They need to take responsibility for and develop accountability to others. Help youth develop social and organizational skills and encourage them to volunteer in their communities.

Finally, teenagers need positive adult role models whom they like and respect. When it come to influencing teenagers, the things you say probably aren't as important as the things you do.

For more information on raising teens, contact your local University of Minnesota Extension Service and ask about the Positive Teen Curriculum.

Source: *Positive Parenting of Teens*, University of Minnesota Extension Service

For more information on parenting call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 and request a catalog of available topics.

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