

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Bloomington High School

*still make the difference!*



## Kindness can make your teen happier and more successful

**R**esearch shows that people who are actively kind to others actually score higher on measures of happiness than people who don't go out of their way to be kind. And happier students tend to be more motivated in general—which ultimately helps them achieve academic success.

To foster kindness in your teen, encourage her to be:

- **Compassionate.** Kind people feel for others, even when they are not directly affected by a situation. Your teen can show compassion by putting herself in others' shoes. She could reach out to a student who seems upset. She could invite a new student to connect on social media.
- **Grateful.** Kind people thank others. Did a counselor go above and

beyond to help your teen with her college applications? She should thank the counselor—and maybe even write a nice note.

- **Considerate.** Kind people take others' feelings, needs and wants into account. Showing up to class on time, sharing notes with a classmate who was absent, and contributing fairly to group projects are all ways your teen can show consideration.
- **Forgiving.** Kind people realize that holding grudges isn't effective. Tell your teen that she will be happier if she focuses on improving the future rather than dwelling on the past.

**Source:** O. Curry and others, "Happy to Help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor," *Open Science Framework*, Center for Open Science.

## Responsibility prepares teens for adulthood



Teens are basically in training for adulthood. Assuming more responsibility for themselves is the

way they get there.

To help your teen along the road, encourage him to:

- **Use a calendar** to manage his time. Seeing school deadlines alongside his other responsibilities will help him plan when to accomplish everything.
- **Schedule his appointments.** This will give him control over his schedule and let him practice valuable social skills.
- **Set a budget** and stick to it. He may have spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. A budget will help him pay attention to his spending—and see that adding to his savings can be rewarding.
- **Plan a family project.** Have him research the steps to take and come up with a budget.
- **Read the news.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with will help him see that his responsibilities (such as mowing the lawn) aren't that bad!

# Consistency can lead to fewer arguments with your teenager



Your teen forgot to take out the trash—again. You're too tired to argue about it, so you let it slide. Parents often think they are avoiding an argument by simply ignoring a situation.

And they are—for the moment. But they're also setting themselves up for a battle the next time they try to enforce the same rule. It's one of the contradictions of discipline. The more consistently you apply consequences, the less you will have to impose them. Consistency is vital for effective discipline.

When you're inconsistent, your teen starts to think you don't really mean what you say. The rules and expectations aren't really rules—

they're more like suggestions. So he'll push back against them all the time. After all, sometimes pushing back or "forgetting" works.

On the other hand, if you enforce a consequence every time your teen forgets to take out the trash, he will know he can't avoid it. And that can motivate your teen to meet expectations and follow the rules every time!

**“Consistency is one of the biggest factors in leading to accomplishment and success.”**

—Byron Pulsifer

# Integrity and respect should guide your teen's behavior



Even a teen with the best of intentions will make mistakes. She may lie to a friend. She may meet up with friends when she told you she wouldn't.

It's important to talk with your teen about acting with integrity. While *morality* is the set of beliefs that help your teen judge what's right and wrong, *integrity* is how she acts on those beliefs. Teens with integrity respect themselves and others. That makes them want to do the right thing.

It's great if your teen says she believes in being honest. But what does she do when her friend asks for the answer to question 10 on the test? Her decision in that instance reflects her integrity.

There are going to be times when your teen makes decisions that she

knows are wrong. Some experts say that teens actually learn integrity during those times—they gain integrity by losing it.

But that only works if someone helps them think through their choice afterward by asking questions like:

- **What got in the way of telling the truth?**
- **Were you trying to impress someone else?**
- **Would you have acted differently if you had been with a different group of people?**

When your teen makes a poor choice, she should hold herself accountable, admit her mistake and make amends. Tell your teen that integrity is like a muscle. The more she uses it, the stronger it will become.

Source: M. Riera, *Staying Connected to Your Teenager*, Perseus Books Group.

# Do you help your teen deal with tough teachers?



Sooner or later, every student encounters a tough teacher. Are you teaching your teen how to work with authority

figures by helping him deal with this challenge? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you reminded** your teen that throughout his life he will have to work with all kinds of people?
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you talked** with your teen about his goals for the class? If he wants to earn a good grade, he will need to work with the teacher.
- \_\_\_ **3. Have you brainstormed** with your teen about things he can do to improve the relationship?
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you explained** to your teen that he is a capable student who works hard—and that you believe in him?
- \_\_\_ **5. Will you encourage** your teen to talk with his counselor if his issues with the teacher persist?

## How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen navigate challenging relationships. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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# Talk to your teen about the high cost of dropping out of school



Henrietta Fore, executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund, has estimated that at least 24 million children are

projected to drop out of school due to Covid-19.

Not long ago, a student who dropped out of high school could still live a comfortable life. In 1967, nearly half of high school dropouts earned enough money to be considered part of the middle class.

But today? Most high school dropouts find themselves at the bottom of the income scale. Many of the jobs that allowed people without an education to earn a good living are gone.

Today, high school dropouts can get only low-wage jobs with little opportunity for advancement—earning around \$31,000 a year. Just by graduating from high school, teens can earn on average \$8,000 more a year.

Poor attendance is often one of the first signs that a student is preparing to drop out of school. If your teen's record is less than perfect, deal with the issue now. Help him get back into the habit of being in every class. Keep him in school today, and you'll help him earn a living in the future.

**Source:** "Median weekly earnings \$606 for high school dropouts, \$1,559 for advanced degree holders," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [nlsbc.com/high\\_cost3](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ninr2.nr001.htm).

# Help your high schooler get the most out of group projects



The idea of a group project is appealing. Students can learn more when they tackle a big project together. They can

develop skills like collaboration that employers are looking for.

But the reality of a group project is often quite different. Some kids may not meet deadlines. One student may not do anything at all. Another may try to dominate the group. And your teen might get stuck with trying to pull everything together on the night before the project is due.

To help your teen make the most of group projects and avoid the pitfalls, encourage him to:

- **Choose group members carefully.** This is not the time to rely on a best friend who is disorganized and over-committed.
- **Set deadlines for each step.** Group projects work best if all members

do their share. But if one person is not pulling his weight, the rest of the group still has time to fill in.

- **Allow for some "disaster" time.** Things happen—computers break down, people get sick. Your teen should make sure the group builds in extra time in the schedule.
- **Make sure one person doesn't dominate.** Studies show that one person who refuses to listen to the rest of the group can have a negative impact on the overall project. Your teen should encourage everyone to feel ownership in the finished product.
- **Ask the teacher for help** when it's needed. If it's a week out and no one has done any work, your teen should talk to the teacher and ask for advice on how to proceed.

**Source:** K. Eckart, "Group project? Taking turns, working with friends may improve grades," Science Daily, [nlsbc.com/high\\_group](https://www.sciencedaily.com/high_group).

**Q:** My daughter had her heart set on going to a particular college. But she has just learned that she was not accepted. However, one of her friends did get in. My daughter has some other colleges to choose from, but she's too sad to focus. How can I help her?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** The time when the college notifications arrive is one of the most stressful for high school seniors. Students who have worked hard don't always get into their top choice school.

To help your daughter cope:

- **Validate her feelings.** Let her know that you understand she is disappointed.
- **Share some facts.** More kids are applying to more colleges than ever before. That means that it's getting tougher for students to get into their first-choice school.
- **Remind her that schools look at more than grades** when admitting students. As for her friend—perhaps she's a great violinist and the orchestra needs musicians. Perhaps she's a goalie and the soccer team is looking for players.
- **Focus on the schools** where she was admitted. Can she visit them? Most schools have events for admitted students. Help her attend with an open mind.

The truth is that there is no one perfect school for any student. So help your teen choose a school that feels like a good fit. If in a year she is still pining for her first-choice school, she can apply to be a transfer student. But by then, she will probably be very happy at the school she chose.

# It Matters: Test Success

## Taking better notes improves test performance



Your teen knows that she needs to study to succeed on tests. She probably rereads chapters in her text,

looks over past assignments and reviews the notes she took in class. Maybe she also makes flashcards or uses other study aides to help her prepare.

So how can she improve her study routine? By improving her note-taking skills. It's unlikely that your teen is able to remember everything the teacher said, so she'll have to rely on her notes to recall important facts.

To help your teen get more out of her class notes, encourage her to:

- **Focus on recording** the teacher's main points. She should listen for repetition and write down vocabulary, formulas, dates and important facts.
- **Keep her notes organized.** They'll only be helpful to your teen later if she can find them easily—and can figure out which notes go with which class.
- **Use a note-taking system,** such as an outline. Using the same system for all of her note-taking will help your teen remember the most important facts when she reviews her notes later.
- **Review her notes** on the day she takes them. Your teen will be more likely to notice if she missed anything when the material is fresh in her mind. Plus, daily reviewing will eliminate the need to cram the night before the test.

## Show your teen how to make a study schedule for tests

**W**hether your teen is facing a chapter test in science class or a college admission test, he shouldn't walk in unprepared. A study schedule will help him get ready so he can do his best.

Make sure your teen:

- **Sets priorities.** A good score on a college admission test might give his application a boost. A poor score in a tough class could mean he has to go to summer school. Tests are important, so he needs to prepare.
- **Blocks out time to study.** Your teen can't study during classes, during practice or at work, for example. He still has to do his work for other classes. Have him look at the calendar and block out other times for study.
- **Reviews past tests.** Teachers often make copies of old tests available. Sample college admission tests are also easy to find. Seeing what is expected can help your teen set a realistic study schedule.



- **Determines what he needs to learn.** It will take longer to study for a unit test if your teen hasn't done the reading or related homework.
- **Leaves time to review.** The night before the test is not the time to learn new material. It's the best time for a final review of the material he's been studying.

## Encourage your teen to create a pre-test organizer



Organization is key for test success. It will be hard for your teen to do well on a test if she doesn't know when

the test is, what to study or what materials she needs.

Encourage your teen to create a pre-test organizer and refer to it often. For upcoming tests, your teen should write down:

- **The class** the test is in.
- **The date** of the test.
- **The format** of the test—essay, fill-in-the-blanks, multiple choice, etc.
- **The topics** that the test will cover.
- **The relevant pages** in the assigned reading.
- **The materials needed** to study—textbook, class notes, past assignments and quizzes.