

# THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE LIVES OF TEENAGERS

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- **Parents need to accept and respect the teen as an individual totally and unconditionally.** A child/adolescent needs to be valued no matter how s/he looks or behaves. A good relationship between a parent and a child facilitates positive behaviours on the child's part, therefore reducing indiscipline and enhancing positive self-concept of the adolescent.
- **Parents serve as role models for their children** by being sensitive and responsive to each one and by showing interest in each child and in his/her experiences.
- **Provide environments that encourage exploration** by guiding, supporting, listening, questioning and supplying appropriate information that encourages teenagers to think for themselves. When parents facilitate and encourage exploration, they help teenagers to develop a sense of accomplishment.
- **Be positive in your approach and communication** by giving directions or suggestions in a positive way, so that your teens do not have to spend time deciphering unnecessary negative information. When parents direct and guide in positive ways they help teenagers to learn acceptable and appropriate behaviour and help to maintain relationships.



Parenting style may have an impact on the teenager's school behavior. Many experts distinguish among permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles. These parenting styles are associated with different combinations of warmth, support, and limit-setting and supervision for children. The permissive style tends to emphasize warmth and neglect limit-setting and supervision; the authoritarian style tends to emphasize the latter and not the former, while the authoritative style is one in which parents offer warmth and support, and limit-setting and supervision.

When the authoritative parenting style is used, the adolescent may be more likely to experience academic success. Authoritative parents are warm and responsive but are also able to establish and enforce standards for their children's behavior, monitor

conduct, and encourage communication. Authoritative parents make clear that they expect responsible behavior from their adolescent or the school – when their teen seems to be having difficulty. However, it is important to remember that adolescents need their parents not only to set appropriate expectations and boundaries, but also to advocate for them. Parents can ease a child’s concerns by being an active participant in their child’s education.

When an adolescent is having difficulty, parents can assist by:

Making the time to listen to and try to understand the teen’s fears or concerns

- setting appropriate boundaries for behaviour that are consistently enforced
- encouraging the teen to participate in one or more school activities
- attending school functions, sports, and plays
- meeting with teachers, and school counselor, asking how they can support the teen’s learning environment, and sharing their expectations for the child’s future
- arranging tutoring or study group support for the teen from the school or the community, providing a supportive home and school environment that clearly values education
- helping the child think about career options by arranging for visits to local companies and colleges, picking up information on careers and courses, and encouraging an internship or career-oriented part-time job
- encouraging the teen to volunteer in the community or to participate in community groups such as the YMCA, Scouting, religious organizations, or other service-oriented groups to provide an out-of-school support system
- emphasizing at home and in school the importance of study skills, hard work, and follow-through

Parents can determine if their teen is in need of extra support. Being aware of common problems can help parents know when it is important to reach out and ask for help before a “difficult time” develops into a more serious situation.

