

Parents Still Make the Difference!



Take time mid-year to review progress, make adjustments

It's the start of a new year--and nearly the halfway point in this school year. So it's a good time to take stock and make any needed adjustments.

Talk with your teen about how the school year is going. Is she making the progress you both would like? How can she make the rest of the school year even better?

Then make some learning resolutions. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Review and update schedules. Between school, activities and time with friends, is your child setting aside enough time to get her homework completed? Is she getting enough sleep?
- Free up time for other activities by reducing screen time. Challenge your teen to keep track of all the time she spends watching TV, surfing the Internet and texting her friends. If she's like most teens, she's spending seven and a half hours on these activities every day. When parents set limits on media use, teens use about three hours fewer per day. One easy way to cut down on screen time is to put the cell phone recharging station away from her bedroom.
- Spend more time reading. Just one in four teens reports reading for pleasure. But the best way to build the vocabulary she'll need in college is to read widely.

Confidence can lead to school success

Teens who are confident often do better in school because they believe they can accomplish goals and overcome problems. To help build your teen's self-esteem:

- Praise accomplishments. So your teen didn't get an A+ on that last math test--he got a B instead. That still means he mastered a good majority of the material! Mention how proud you are that his studying paid off--and that the mistakes he did make are great learning opportunities.
- Ask about his goals. Talk to your teen about his plans for the future. Work together to come up with ways he could achieve his goals.
- Take pride in your teen. Let him overhear you bragging about him and his accomplishments to relatives or neighbors. It will bring a smile to his face!

Is grounding an effective discipline technique for teens?

He walks in the door an hour after curfew. After you breathe a sigh of relief, you fall back on an old discipline tactic: "You're grounded."

Does grounding work? Experts say it can. The fear of being grounded can be an effective way to encourage teens to follow family rules.

But if grounding is used too frequently, or inappropriately, it can drive a wedge between you and your teen. Here are some ways to make grounding work:

- Establish rules and consequences in advance. It's easier to invoke a consequence if your teen already knows it's coming.
- Don't use grounding as a punishment for everything. It's best to use logical consequences whenever you can. So if he's out late at a party with friends, then grounding makes sense. If he gets in a fight with his sister, grounding isn't really connected to the problem.
- Limit the time your teen is grounded. The greater the time between when he broke the rule, the tougher it is for your teen to make a connection.