

Parent Guide



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Behaviors for
Teens

Sex, Alcohol, And Drugs	Increased Use Of Communication Devices And Social Media	Mood Swings	Aggression	Lying Or Hiding Facts
Teens are increasingly indulging in alcohol, drugs, and sex long before they reach the legal age. Don't be surprised if you find that your 15 or 16-year-old has started to drink socially and is sexually active. If you find that your child's friends and classmates are also indulging in such activities, then it is safe to assume that it is "normal" teen behavior, and not a physical or mental illness. It is easy to get addicted to these vices. Substance abuse can often lead to depression, liver failure, and other chronic diseases	Use of communication devices and social media is not bad. In fact, it is necessary for teens to have a mobile phone so that parents can keep a track of their whereabouts. However, the use of these devices can turn into an addiction and affect your kid's lifestyle and attitude. Social media can open doors for strangers who may want to take undue advantage of your naive teenager, which can be dangerous.	Mood swings are common in teenagers, with them being happy sometimes and cranky the other times. Anything and everything can set them off, and they can go on endless tirades of how unfair you are. Mood swings can also indicate depression sometimes. Parents can distinguish between teen rebellion and mood swings, and depression by considering the severity and duration of the mood swings and the domains that are affected by these swings	Your teenager may get angry with you often and for reasons that are incomprehensible. They may become argumentative and talk back more than they did when they were kids. Understand that anger is a normal human emotion, and it is common among teens. But if they don't channelize their anger properly, it can become aggression and result in violence, which can be dangerous to them and others.	It can be devastating for parents to find that their child has lied to them, or has not revealed everything. The truth is that their new sense of independence makes it seem unnecessary for them to tell you everything. Also, the fear of being judged and punished may force your teen to lie, which could become a compulsive habit if not nipped in the bud

Solution

As a parent, do not approve these activities but at the same time, do not panic and react instantly. Kids could take to alcohol early on due to violence or abuse at home, parent's divorce or sheer peer pressure. One of the most effective ways to prevent alcohol or drug abuse is to talk about it. Talk to your teenager calmly and explain why they shouldn't be indulging in drugs, alcohol, or sex early in their life. Avoid an accusing tone when you bring up the issue, and try to be friendly. Experts also say that teens, who eat dinner regularly with their parents, participate in after-school activities and are not allowed to wander around late at night, have a significantly lower risk of becoming involved in these situations.	Not giving your teenager a mobile phone or completely cutting off social media access is not a good idea. In fact, it may backfire and lead to stealing, hiding, and lying. It is common for teens to own a mobile phone. Get them one but have strict rules about what they use it for. Monitor how they use the Internet – keep a tab on their browsing history if possible. Have an open arrangement about it so that you don't have to check on them behind their back. Also, encourage them to talk about what they do online, by being friendly and open to their ideas and interests. Another way to deal with this issue is to have restrictions on time spent on texting and calling their friends or on social media when they are at home.	A common mistake that parents do is trivialize what their teen is going through. You may feel that your child is overreacting, but that will only make them feel misunderstood. That can shut them off completely. Avoid giving advice or diverting the topic. Rather than brushing off their reaction, try to listen and empathize. Let them talk about it and you may even be able to lead them to realize that the drama is not worth it	Parents often react to an angry, shouting teen by shouting back. Avoid the temptation to be louder than your teen and 'win' the argument, because that does not always fetch the desired results. In fact, your teen may feel pushed to a corner and become even more aggressive when you try to dominate him. The only way to calm an angry teen is to be calm. Find ways to control your anger and listen to what your teenager has to say. Avoid arguments as far as possible and let your teen vent out all the anger. Once they run out of things to say, they will calm down. Encourage them to talk to you when there is a problem instead of bottling it up. Teach them healthy ways to express anger rather than being aggressive or violent.	Honesty is a trait that you should encourage your children to build. Teach them to tell you the truth, by setting an example for them. Have an open channel of communication with your kids, which allows them to share anything and everything without hesitation. When kids see their parents being truthful and honest about everything, including their mistakes, they will learn to do the same. Avoid being judgmental. If you point out flaws in everything and correct every mistake they make, they may fear that you will never approve of them, and may stop sharing and communicating with you
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Solution

Risky Behaviors of
Teens

Defying Rules And Arguing	Drastic Changes In Appearance	Decreased Communication	Spending More Time With Friends	Indecisiveness
Teenagers are rebellious. They may not always want to do what you tell them to and would want to see the extent to which they can defy you. When teenagers argue with you and refuse to obey rules, do not punish them and act like a tyrant as it makes them more stubborn. They break rules more often. They may refuse to do chores, and talk back all the time	The 'rebellion' bug, combined with the enthusiasm to experiment, can make your teen do a lot of things you may not understand. One of them is a drastic change in their appearance – your child may take to a specific style of dressing, may insist on having nothing but branded clothes, and may change their hairstyle without consulting you. Girls may start using makeup, while boys may change their hairstyles and get tattoos. Teenage is when kids get in touch with their sexuality, and their newly discovered sexual preferences may also affect their dressing. Physical appearance and eating disorders are closely linked. If your teen is eating too much or too little, starving herself, exercising more than needed, vomiting everything she eats, or constantly worries that she is fat or ugly, it can indicate serious problems like eating disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders	Your teenager is not talking to you as much as you would want him or her to. But think about it, did you talk to your parents all the time as a teenager? Probably not. Also, your teen may seem to share more with her friends than she does with you. While you may want to know about everything that happens in your child's life, it is not a reasonable ask for a teenager.	Teenagers' sense of identity is based on who they hang out with. If they seem to be spending more time with their friends instead of with you at home, it is because they want to fit in, which is typical teenager behavior. The problem is when your teen spends more time with people you do not approve of (not that your teen cares about your approval), or with people who you think can influence your teen negatively.	Teens are often confused and indecisive because of the physical and emotional changes they go through. Whether it is something as simple as what to wear to school or something as important as what college to pick, your teenager may seem to have a tough time making a choice. Indecisiveness may also be a sign of depression although not always

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Solution	<p>Teenagers are confused and need guidance to stay on the right path. They need limits to help them stay in control. When you create rules, you also create limits to help them. Be clear about the rules, be it about how late they can stay out on a school night, or what they are supposed to do at home. Make the consequences clear if they defy the rules and enforce them, regardless of how trivial the issue may seem. Your teenager will know that you are serious about the rules, and that will instill a sense of discipline in them. You could also involve them in setting rules and punishments. This way they would clearly know what they are in for, if they go out of bounds. Remember that as your teenager gets older, it is normal for them to want more independence. This is part of them getting ready to leave home, so try not to take their behavior personally and remember this is part of what they need to do.</p>	<p>The most important thing you can do as a parent is accept them as they are and help them do the same. Teach them to embrace who they are and how they look – this will help them deal with the pressures of looking ‘cool’ or ‘hot’ when they start high school. Getting your teenagers to dress like the way you want them to can be next to impossible. Instead of rejecting their choices outright, try to indicate subtly that the ‘look’ doesn’t seem so cool and give them better options they may like.</p>	<p>If you force your teenager to tell you everything, they may end up fabricating stories to please you, which is not what you want. Accept that your teenager will not tell you everything. However, do let them know that they must inform you about all of the important events of their lives as you are the guardian. Emphasize that you’d like to know what’s happening in their life only because you care about them and want to make sure they are happy. It is also important to realize that the part of the brain that links emotions to communication is still developing in teenagers, so they may not be able to put words to what is happening for them. In moments when they are feeling down, acknowledge it and offer them support. This can be enough to help them put words to what is happening for them.</p>	<p>You may not like your teenager’s friends because of their appearance or because of their attitude. If it is appearance, remember that is not always a good idea to judge a book by its cover. Take the time to know your child’s friends before rejecting them. If you think that you are not happy with the kids’ attitude, you may want to bring that to your teenager’s notice in a subtle way. Gently share your concerns in a non-judgemental way whilst telling your teenager that you trust them to make the right decision. This will encourage them to review the friendships they are choosing and not feel pressured into making their own choices. Remember that building a network outside of the family unit is a normal part of a teenager developing more independence.</p>	<p>Teenage is the right time to introduce decision-making skills. Teach them different ways in which an option can be evaluated or gauged to make the right choice. Make sure that you do not, in any way, put them down or laugh at them for not being able to make a simple choice. Also, avoid the temptation to make the choice for them. If you offer too much advice, they may end up making the wrong choice just to be defiant or prove that they can make decisions too.</p>	Solution
	<p>Actively listening means paying close attention to what your child is saying and feeling, rather than thinking of what you want to say next. This shows your child that you care and that you’re interested.</p>	<p>Family rules make expectations about behaviour clear. If you can, involve all family members in the discussions about rules. Try to keep the rules positive. For example, instead of saying ‘Don’t be disrespectful,’ you could say, ‘We speak to each other with respect’.</p>	<p>You can do this by using a brief and fair consequence that you and your child have agreed on in advance. It helps if you link the consequence to the broken rule – for example, ‘Because you didn’t come home at the agreed time, you’ll need to stay home this weekend’. This also helps you communicate your expectations about future behavior.</p>	<p>If you need to use a consequence, explain why you’re doing it. This gives your child the chance to reflect on what she could change to stop the problem coming up again. For example, you could say something like, ‘Gemma, I get worried when you stay out late without telling me what you’re doing. Next time, I’ll pick you up at 10 pm. What could you do differently next time so you don’t get a consequence?’</p>	<p>Children – even teenagers – do as you do, so being a being a role model for your child is a powerful and positive way to guide your child’s behaviour. For example, when your child sees you following the family rules yourself, he gets a powerful example.</p>	
	<p>Before you get into conflict over your child’s behavior, ask yourself, ‘Does this really matter?’ and ‘Is this really worth fighting about?’ Less negative feedback means fewer opportunities for conflict and bad feelings.</p>	<p>Your child is an individual and she needs to know that she’s valued, accepted and respected for who she is. One way to do this is by taking her developing ideas and opinions seriously, even if you don’t necessarily agree with them.</p>	<p>Whether it’s an argument with your child or a disagreement with your partner, using positive problem-solving skills to sort things out helps to keep you calm. It also gives your child a great example to follow.</p>	<p>Descriptive praise and encouragement are powerful motivators. Teenagers might seem self-sufficient, but your child still wants and needs your approval. When you notice and comment on your child’s responsible choices and positive behaviour, you encourage her to keep behaving in that way. Just remember that teenagers often prefer you to praise them privately rather than in front of their friends.</p>	<p>Telling your child honestly how his behavior affects you can help your relationship. ‘I’ statements can be a big help here. For example, saying ‘I really worry when you don’t come home on time’ will probably get a better response than ‘You know you’re supposed to ring me after school!’</p>	
	<p>Telling your child honestly how his behavior affects you can help your relationship. ‘I’ statements can be a big help here. For example, saying ‘I really worry when you don’t come home on time’ will probably get a better response than ‘You know you’re supposed to ring me after school!’</p>	<p>Everybody makes mistakes, and nobody’s perfect. It’s all about how you deal with mistakes – both your own and your child’s – when they happen. Taking responsibility for mistakes is a good first step, and then working out what you can do to make things better might be your next move.</p>	<p>Asking for your child’s permission to enter his room, and not going through his phone or belongings, are ways to show this respect. Another way might be to think about what you really need to know, and what can be left as private between your child and his friends.</p>	<p>When you follow through on promises, good or bad, your child learns to trust and respect you. Be clear and consistent, and promise only what you know you can deliver.</p>	<p>Just as you might do, your child will probably slip up and break the rules sometimes. Teenagers and their brains are still under construction – they’re still working out who they are. Testing boundaries is all part of the process, so it helps to be realistic about your child’s behavior.</p>	