

Help Youth Succeed!!

For the past forty years, scientists have been studying what successful parents do. Now they can tell us what wise grandmothers already knew.



Effective parents richly reward their children's behavior every chance they get.

- Children—and teens—need lots of positive reinforcement—attention, interest, praise, love—as they grow and learn. If adults are not supportive, kids will seek rewards elsewhere—from computer games, risk-taking peers, or substance use. Lack of rewards worsens problems like ADHD and depression. Some examples:
 - ☆ Catch your kids being good! Look for good things they do and pay attention to them when they do them.
 - ☆ Create a “Pride Wall” at home where your kids can put up weekly self-selected positive work or mementos.
 - ☆ Spend time playing with them; children learn all kinds of skills when playing with their parents.

- Successful parents give their kids lots of chances to learn and practice new skills. They show them how to do new things by being a good model. Youth learn from watching others, not from lectures.
 - ☆ Involve youth in lots of activities, projects, games, or other events in your home and in the community.
 - ☆ Let them take the lead. Research shows that parents become more influential in their children's lives when they follow their child's lead in fun activities.

- Be warm and caring.
 - ☆ Be patient. Kids make mistakes. Accept that you may often feel frustrated or worried when they make mistakes. But if you are loving and patient, you will do much more to help them learn than if you show you are upset.
 - ☆ Spend time everyday in positive, loving interactions
 - ☆ Use kind words, tone, and gestures when giving instructions
 - ☆ Notice at least one specific loving or kind act that your child did each day
 - ☆ Schedule walks with your youth twice a week, to talk and exercise
 - ☆ The increase in sex hormones during puberty causes changes in the brain, which makes teens more moody and irritable. By showing warmth and acceptance, you can reduce their emotional distress.



Successful parents monitor what their kids do and stay involved—even when they are teens.

- Know what your children are doing every day. When young people are together with little or no supervision, they often encourage risky behaviors in each other. This can be dangerous since young people's brains don't yet have the skills to assess risk.

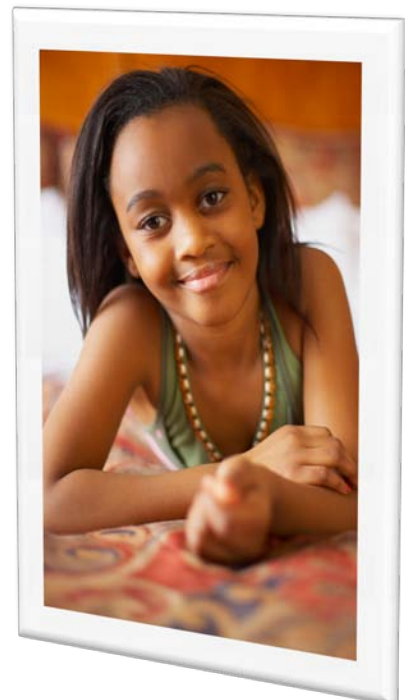
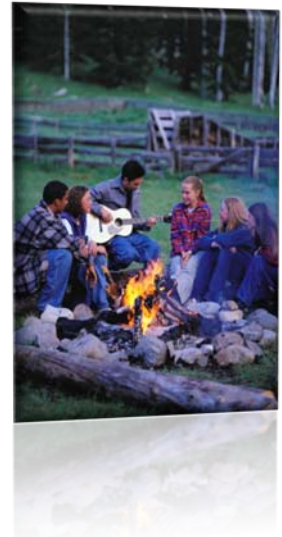
- ☆ Know where your children are, who is with them, and what they are doing
- ☆ Praise and reward them for coming home on time
- ☆ Check with the parents of your child's friends to make sure that gatherings are supervised
- ☆ Limit the time your youth spends at home alone
- ☆ If your child is home alone, call them periodically
- ☆ Ensure that parties are well supervised
- ☆ Make sure your children are doing their homework.

- Stay involved in your children's lives. Staying involved gets more difficult as kids become teens. But it is just as important. Too often, adults let go just when kids need strong guidance and support. If you can really get involved, either by taking part or by always attending and watching, their performances, games, events, projects, and activities, you'll show them that you care about them and want to know more about their favorite things. Plus, you have a chance to have some fun with your kids while also knowing what they are doing.

- ☆ Take an interest in the things your teen cares about
- ☆ Schedule your children's events in your own calendar
- ☆ Help out with and attend their events, games, and performances
- ☆ Participate together in activities that your teen enjoys
- ☆ Support, attend, and express interest in your kids' performances, sports, events, projects, and activities.
- ☆ Ask your kids to tell you about their goals and what they need to do to achieve them.

- Listen to your kids' ideas and concerns. When young people feel ignored, they are more likely to rebel. Provide ways for them to talk about their concerns, worries, goals, and ideas. This way they learn patience and they learn from you how to solve problems and get along with others.

- ☆ Ask your child or teen how they would solve a problem at home or at school.
- ☆ Ask your children what they would do about issues that are in the news.
- ☆ Do surveys from newspapers and magazines together to initiate talk about your similarities and differences.



Good parents guide their children all along the way.

- They make a small number of rules that are easy to understand. They gently but consistently enforce those rules. Even teenagers' brains are still developing the ability to control impulses and to think through the results of their actions. Clear, consistent rules help them learn self-control. Harsh or inconsistent consequences can backfire and lead to aggression and sneaky behavior. Skilled parents help children and teens deal with distress by remaining consistent and calm even when they are giving them a negative consequence for misbehaving. Getting angry will simply result in your child getting angry and more rebellious.



- ☆ Clearly state a few key rules, and praise kids when they follow them
 - ☆ State clearly that you will not permit their use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
 - ☆ Make a rule that homework is done before leisure activities on school nights
 - ☆ Use the When/Then Rule (e.g., when they finish their homework, then they may play video games)
 - ☆ Set non-harsh consequences for breaking rules and enforce them consistently (e.g., no time with friends for one week for experimenting with tobacco or alcohol)
 - ☆ Use a "lottery" of penalties or fines for minor problems because it helps youth realize that that negative consequences can be a bit unpredictable
 - ☆ For noncompliance or minor rule breaking, begin by asking the youth to perform the appropriate behavior. If they correct themselves, praise them. If they break the rule again, warn them that if they don't comply, they will face a mild, negative consequence. If they still disobey, deliver the consequence, but do it matter-of-factly.
- Give lots of opportunities to engage in positive activities. Engaging in healthy and positive behaviors helps youth learn positive skills and make new friends, and prevents them from experimenting with problem behaviors.



- ☆ Give your children meaningful jobs or roles at home.
- ☆ Provide positive recognition when they complete them.
- ☆ Provide enough support for your youth to succeed in school.
- ☆ Communicate with teachers about how your child is doing.
- ☆ Work with the teacher to solve any problems.

- Structure positive interactions with friends and brothers and sisters. Guide your kids away from troublesome peers. Research shows that friends who get into trouble are likely to get your kids into trouble. Parents who make sure their kids don't get involved with friends who get into trouble prevent problems like drug use and delinquency.
- ☆ Set up a weekend or weekly family reward for when brothers and sisters cooperate and do not fight
 - ☆ Often play games or do projects that teach sharing, patience, cooperation, or teamwork, and provide positive fun or socializing
 - ☆ Limit contact with problematic peers to well-supervised settings only.

- Set limits on “screen time” and media content. Electronic media can disrupt youths’ social skills, contribute to inactivity, disturb their sleep, expose them to violent or other inappropriate content, and tempt them to engage in risky behavior.

- ☆ Keep TV, video games, and internet out of your children’s bedroom!
- ☆ Limit total screen time to 2-3 hours per day
- ☆ Make R-rated or equivalent media off-limits without your prior scrutiny
- ☆ Watch media together with your youth, and talk about how the values presented fit with your family’s values
- ☆ For teens, set a rule that phone calls and text messages go “off” at 10pm.
- ☆ Make sure your children get enough sleep. Recent research shows that most youth—especially teens get too little sleep. It affects their ability to learn and their mood.

Effective parents model and teach.

- Provide many culturally relevant role models of positive, healthy behavior. The media saturate young adolescents with negative models. Limit their exposure to negative models and make sure they have lots of models of skilled and healthy behavior.

- ☆ Connect youth to wise adults they can relate to and learn from
- ☆ Point out and discuss local “heroes” doing positive things in the community
- ☆ Limit youths’ exposure to negative, unhealthy role models in the media, and teach them to question how often that sort of behavior really happens in the real world

- Help your children learn academic, social, problem-solving, and health skills. The media rarely provide such instruction, and it must happen if young people are going to develop the skills they need to succeed. Changes in the brain during early adolescence also make it important to revisit skills first taught in elementary years.

- ☆ Discuss values, emotions, health, friendships, sexuality, and substance use; they want your guidance and wisdom in these matters.
- ☆ Let your kids know you accept and are open to any question about these or other difficult topics. You may feel distress when talking about sensitive topics, but you can listen and guide lovingly, even when you are worried.
- ☆ Notice and praise your child for handling anger, frustration, or disappointment well.
- ☆ Ask your kids how certain actions or people could help or hurt them achieve important goals.
- ☆ Brainstorm together solutions to problems at home or school.
- ☆ Involve your kids in preparing at least one healthy meal each week for the whole family.



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