



## Middle School Guidance Officer Report

### Raising Teenagers:

### Parental Role in Teen Psychology ---Keep Communication Lines Open

Parents have a large role in contributing to the emotional, spiritual and physical health of a child and adolescent, as well as a responsibility to provide direction, guidance, firmness, and proper boundaries in family life (appropriate and reasonable limits).

Additionally, successful parents keep the communication lines with their adolescents open. They are reasonable and loving in dealing with the mistakes and failures of their children. If they learn not to overreact when their teenagers "mess up," even if it is as serious as a pregnancy or getting suspended for cutting, drug use, or some other serious reason, then the teenager will be less likely to lie and more likely to talk to the parent about their problems. By the time an adolescent reaches 15 to 18 years, they are already establishing patterns of self-determination, that is, they are learning to make their own decisions.

The role of the parent during these years is delicate. Firmness is necessary to protect the teen from unwholesome influences, but at the same time, that firmness can't be taken to the point of being oppressive or overbearing.

Additionally, parents should be aware that drugs are a real part of teen sub-culture; 40% to 50% of teenagers have tried marijuana by the time they are 18, and approximately 20% may be regular users (at least once a month), while 6.5% of high school seniors use marijuana daily (National Institutes of Health. 2012). Students who smoke marijuana are 60% less likely to graduate high school, and seven times more likely to attempt suicide, according to an Australian study published in The Lancet Psychiatry (Silins, E., PhD, et al. 2014, September).

Some adolescents who have anger management issues, or who are violent or unstable may be using marijuana fairly regularly unbeknownst to their parents or to the child's study team who may be involved. All of this ties into the subject of adolescent psychology, and even child study teams need to be more aware of the destabilising influence that covert use of drugs, such as marijuana and Ecstasy, can have on adolescents even if not used daily or weekly.

If a parent establishes certain house rules which might place some serious restrictions on the teen (such as, no video games during the school year, or encouraging teens to listen to less music during the day, such as on the way to and from school or in school; for some teens, excessively indulging in passive music during the day can contribute to depression), then the parent needs to think about what they can do to replace the thing that the teen has been asked to give up something positive that the teen will appreciate as well as benefit from. If a teenager is listening to too much music, for example, the parents might consider providing music lessons for the musically inclined child or teen so that he or she can develop their talent in a positive and directed or focused way.

If the issue is the Internet in the bedroom, curfew, or not "hanging out" with certain people, are the parents providing other forms of wholesome recreation, hobbies, or



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lessons for the child or teen that will take the place of the thing that is being restricted? This is essential for the teenager not to feel oppressed or restricted. There are plenty of wholesome activities and supervised recreation programs that parents can take advantage of to help the teen or child develop their interests and talents and to keep them busy in worthwhile pursuits.

Parents who spend their evenings watching television while their children hang out on the streets are setting themselves up for failure. This is true not only in the inner cities, but in the suburbs as well. Parents need to be diligent, and realize that they need to be very active in ensuring the success of their adolescent.

What a young person takes into his or her mind, his childhood experiences, as well as his lifestyle, social relationships, and family life can have an effect on his or her mental health. Teen's need love and attention, and youths also need to feel needed, have a need for approval, and a need for someone mature to talk to, to receive guidance, discipline, and clear boundaries.

Teenagers need limits and a certain amount of parental control, which will slowly decrease as he or she matures. If a child has no clear boundaries, this can lead to instability. For success in raising teenagers, young people also need stability in their home; a secure, orderly, and clean place to live in so that they can thrive emotionally and psychologically.

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