

Helping Your Teen Adjust to High School

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Here are some ways to ease your teenager's adjustment to high school both socially and academically.

- **Find out about orientations for students and parents before the school year begins.**
- **Touch base with your child's guidance counselor early on.** Your teenager's guidance counselor can explain the different choices and requirements and help you determine if your child is taking the right classes.
- **Stay involved in your child's school life.** Typically, parental involvement drops off by high school, mostly because parents feel pressured by time constraints and aren't sure their children want them to be involved. Experts agree, however, that parental involvement is key to school success.
 - Join a Parent's Council
 - Attend parent-teacher conferences. If you aren't sure how to schedule one, call the school office to find out.
 - Try to attend school-related functions like sports events, plays, or concerts.
- **Get to know your teenager's friends.** Friends will play a big role throughout high school, and will have an effect on your child's school performance. If your teenager's friends like school, chances are your teenager will too. Though you may not always like all of your teenager's friends, it's important to invite them into your home. Get to know who they are, what their values are, and how they think.
- **Help your teenager learn to manage their time.** Homework demands increase dramatically in high school and so do social activities. Your teenager may need help learning to balance the demands of sports, clubs, homework, social life, free time, and possibly a job. Help your teenager make choices and set priorities. This may include deciding to temporarily drop an activity. Learning to balance work and free time takes practice.
- **Help your teenager develop homework skills.** Your child may need help with time management, prioritizing, setting goals, study skills, tackling tough subjects, and breaking big assignments down into parts. If you can't provide this help on your own, you might consider seeking help from a teacher, school counselor, or tutor. Study groups and tutoring are helpful for many students. Summer programs offering academic assistance are also available.

- **Encourage participation in extracurricular activities.** Whether it's joining a math club, playing on the hockey team, or working in a soup kitchen, encourage your child to get involved in activities outside the classroom. Kids who participate in clubs, sports, or activities where they feel a part of something feel better about themselves. Extracurricular involvement is also a plus for college applications.

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- **Set a limit on how many hours a week your child is allowed to work if he has a part time job.** Experts recommend that teenagers work no more than 15 to 20 hours.
- **Be sure your teenager gets enough sleep.** Experts recommend an average of nine hours of sleep a night for adolescents. This is an ideal that's often difficult to achieve. Teenagers have different clocks than adults do, and they have lots of demands on their time. Still, it's worth trying to coax your teenager to bed at a reasonable hour. Studies show that teenagers who get close to this amount of sleep do better in school.
- **Be sure your teenager gets regular exercise.** Physical activity is important for good health. Regular exercise such as bicycling, walking, running, rollerblading or swimming helps reduce stress, keeps the body fit, and can be lots of fun.
- **Encourage independent and responsible behavior.** Once in high school, teenagers need to learn to make responsible decisions on their own. You can help by trusting your teenager to make his own choices. Ask for his opinions about things. Involve your teenager in family decisions, and listen to what he has to say. You won't always agree with his decisions — he may make mistakes, but that's how he will learn.
- **Watch for signs of stress.** Stress can affect social relationships, schoolwork, and a child's happiness and emotional well-being. Some signs of stress include headaches, stomachaches, eating or sleeping too much or too little, loss of interest in school or friends, or irritable, angry, or aggressive behavior. Here are ways to reduce the stress in your child's life.
 - Do what you can to be more available when your teenager is feeling stressed. Try to simplify your family life so you can focus on your child's needs.
 - Avoid setting expectations that are too high for your child. Focus on who your child is, and not on what you wish he would be.
 - Help your child find support from teachers, mentors, relatives, and other adults in your community. Research shows that children who have positive connections with adults are more likely to have an easier time with adolescence.
- **If your teenager is having a difficult time adjusting to high school, seek help from a teacher, or school counselor.** Don't wait problem escalates. Signs that in school include: poor disorders, marked weight loss or depression, or increased counselors can help, so call the child is experiencing any of these



for a call from school or until the your child might be having trouble attendance, poor grades, eating weight gain, prolonged sadness, discipline problems. Teachers and school right away if you think your problems.

Remember! There is always someone you can talk to.