

Family Time: Teens and Tweens Series: Parent-Child Involvement Strategies

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Parent-child relationships involve communication and interactions to prepare “tweens” ages (10 through 12) and teens (ages 13 through 19) with skills and abilities to make healthy decisions. Each year hundreds of thousands of young people engage in risky and negative behaviors, that range from trying a cigarette for the first time to becoming addicted to prescription drugs.

Developing a strong bond with your children at an early age is important, but as the parent, it is your job to provide the rules, structure, and discipline to raise a healthy child. Be a parent, not a pal. Set rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Your children will surely test you by pushing the boundaries. This is to be expected. Stay strong and follow through with the consequences previously set.

Parent-Child Involvement Strategies

- **Stay involved in your child’s/family’s lives**
 - “Unmonitored, unsupervised time is one of the highest risk factors for children and youth. The period when youth get home from school and before their parents get home from work can be especially risky.” (University of Delaware Cooperative Extension)
 - Strategy/Action step recommendations:
 - 4 C’s of supervision can help you with this difficult task:
 - Clear rules – Have a few non-negotiable rules about your child’s behavior and state them clearly. For example:
 - “Give me a phone number for any place you will be.”
 - Communication – Regular communication with other parents and teachers:
 - Keeps you involved in your child’s activities
 - Creates resources to deal with problems and build a strong safety net for your child
 - Informs you of dangerous places or people
 - Checking up – Your child knows that you care about his or her safety and that your rules are important. This may be hard because you want to trust your children and they may resist your efforts.
 - Find out about the parties and special events your child wants to attend to ensure that responsible adults will be supervising
 - When your child gives you the phone number of a friend, call it and talk to the parent.
 - Consistency – Supervision is most effective when limits are set. Give praise and incentives when a rule is followed and if misbehavior occurs follow through with consequences.
 - It is less likely to become involved with drug-using friends if bonds are created with family and at school.
 - Strategy/action step recommendation
 - Know your child’s friends in the neighborhood and at school:
 - Communicate with friends and their parents whenever possible
 - Observe behaviors, speech, and attitude and acknowledge and encourage positive behavior

- Stay involved in your child’s activities:
 - Help your child understand his or her feelings
 - Discuss your child’s new ideas
 - Be responsible for sex and drug information
 - Share your values and beliefs; it gives your child a base from which to work
- Talking to your child when a concern arises:
 - Spending time with friends you don’t know
 - Changes in speech and attitude
 - Changes in schoolwork
 - Lying and sneaking around
- Spending time together can decrease negative peer influence:
 - Play board/outdoor games
 - Read with your child or tell family stories
 - Support your child’s interest in activities such as drawing, scientific curiosity, music, and cooking
 - Include your child in social/cultural events in the community
 - Invite your child’s friends and family over for activities

For further information:

Contact the University of Guam, Cooperative Extension and Outreach at 735-2080 for help or more information. Additional publications can be found on our website at: uog.edu/extension/publications.

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