

Every Child Every Promise

TURNING FAILURE INTO ACTION

Every Child, Every Promise examined how much children and youth experience the Five Promises, or positive features of development, that research shows are connected both to avoiding risky behavior such as alcohol or other drug use and to positive outcomes such as volunteering or doing well at school.

The Five Promises are Caring Adults, Safe Places and Constructive Use of Time, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others.

AMERICA'S PROMISE
ALLIANCE



www.americaspromise.org

ISSUE BRIEF

P A R E N T I N G

NATIONAL STUDY:

Teens with Stronger Parent Influence Fare Better in Health, Education

The conventional wisdom that all relationships between teenagers and their parents are tumultuous is wrong, according to research from the America's Promise Alliance. In fact, the overwhelming majority of young people ages 12-17 say they have a "mostly" or "very" close relationship with their mothers and fathers and can usually or always talk with their parents about problems they might be having with school or friends, finds *Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure into Action* (ECEP).

The Alliance surveyed a national sample of more than 2,000 teenagers and 2,000 of their parents in a telephone poll, with the help of Search Institute, Child Trends and the Gallup Organization. More than 80% of teens said they had a close relationship with their mother, and more than 70% said the same about their fathers. About 80% also said they could usually talk with their mothers about problems. Teens said they talk with their fathers a little less, but even so, nearly two-thirds said they could usually talk with their fathers about problems.

Those high quality parental-teen relationships make a difference in how well young people are doing in their health, at school, and in other aspects of their lives. The researchers created a "parent influence" index from those relationship quality questions, plus several other questions that asked teenagers how much their parents know about their friends and whereabouts after school, how safe teens feel at home (nearly 90% always feel safe), and how much teens and parents talk about school. When the results to all those questions were added up, and young people with the top, middle, and bottom third of scores on "parent influence" were compared, the top third were consistently better than the middle and lower third on a variety of health and education outcomes. Having even some of this positive parent influence was beneficial too, since the middle third were consistently better than the lowest third in those measures of well-being.

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NATIONAL STUDY: Teens with Stronger Parent Influence Fare Better in Health, Education

Young people with high quality parental influences were, not surprisingly, more likely to experience the Caring Adults Promise. But, they were also far more likely to experience Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. For example, 67% of teenagers with high quality parental influence felt safe and had constructive things to do with their time, such as involvement in high-quality after-school programs, versus just 20% with low quality influence. And 61% with high quality influences had schools where students felt challenged and treated fairly, among other aspects of effective education, versus just 21% in the low quality group who enjoyed such schools. Overall, 50% of teens who had high quality parental influence also experienced at

least 4 of the Five Promises, what we would consider to be "enough" of these key developmental resources. This compares to less than 10% of those with low quality parental influence.

Given the importance of academic achievement, high school graduation, and workplace readiness in public policy, the researchers also looked at other relevant measures of academic and workforce skills and found the same impact of parent influence. Teenagers with high parent influence were more likely than those with less parent influence to attend school, work up to their

ability, and get mostly As. They were also more likely to say they could communicate well, get along well with diverse people, budget and save money, and use computers.

PERCENTAGE WITH OUTCOMES, BY PARENT INFLUENCE SCORES

OUTCOME*	HIGH THIRD	MEDIUM THIRD	LOW THIRD
Safe Places & Constructive Use of Time	67	43	20
Healthy Start	49	36	22
Effective Education	61	37	21
Opportunities to Help Others	61	55	44
Experiences 4-5 of the 5 Promises	50	24	8
Gets Mostly As	50	33	28
Gets Mostly Bs	88	82	73
School Attendance	94	89	84
School Engagement	55	35	22
Everyday Workplace Skills	69	56	44

N = 2,015 12-17 year olds

* For binary scoring, young people were counted as "experiencing" a Promise if they met the criterion for having about 75% of the individual indicators that comprised each Promise. They needed to "have" 5-6 of the 6 indicators to "have" the Safe Places Promise, 6-8 of 8 indicators to have A Healthy Start, 7-9 of 9 indicators to have Effective Education, and 4-5 of 5 indicators to have Opportunities to Help Others.

Although it can be challenging for parents to have a close relationship with their teenage sons and daughters from time-to-time, ECEP shows that the desire to shut parents out is far less than imagined. The right balance in parenting is always a work in progress and is different for every family — being close but not smothering, monitoring their kids but not spying, available to talk and listen but not interrogating, having meaningful conversations about school, not just asking questions that can be answered with a

shrug or a yes-no. ECEP shows, though, that parents who find the right balance and end up having a high level of influence in their children's lives will have something worth celebrating on Mother's and Father's Day children who are safe, healthy, and engaged, and on the right track to achieving their own American Dream.

Details about the large "National Promises Study" are available from America's Promise at www.americaspromise.org, and from Search Institute at www.search-institute.org

Monitoring Your Teen's Activities: What Parents and Families Should Know



The teen years are a time of rapid growth, exploration, and risk taking. Taking risks provides young people the opportunity to test their skills and abilities and discover who they are. But, some risks—such as smoking, using drugs, drinking and driving, and having unprotected sex—can have harmful and long-lasting effects on a teen's health and well-being.

Parents are a powerful influence in the lives of their teens. When parents make a habit of knowing about their teens—what they are doing, who they are with, and where they are and setting clear expectations for behavior with regular check-ins to be sure these expectations are being met—they can reduce their teens' risks for injury, pregnancy, and drug, alcohol, and cigarette use. These parents are **monitoring** their teens' activities and behavior.

To learn more about how parents can better monitor their teens, CDC sponsored a panel of leading academic researchers in the field of parental monitoring. The findings from this expert panel led to the development of a book entitled, *Parental Monitoring of Adolescents: Current Perspectives for Researchers and Practitioners*.¹ The following information reflects key findings and recommendations from this book.

What is parental monitoring?

Parental monitoring includes 1) the expectations parents have for their teen's behavior; 2) the actions parents take to keep track of their teen; and 3) the ways parents respond when their teen breaks the rules.

You are using parental monitoring when you ask your teen

- Where will you be?
- Whom will you be with?
- When will you be home?

You are also monitoring when you

- Check in with your teen by phone.
- Get to know his or her friends and their parents.
- Talk with your teen about how he or she spends time or whether he or she is making safe choices.
- Set and enforce rules for your teen's behavior by clearly explaining the rules and consequences and following through with appropriate consequences when the rules are broken.



Monitoring should start in early childhood and continue throughout the teen years, evolving as children grow and mature. As children develop into teenagers, adults might view them as more independent and less in need of monitoring. But, consistent monitoring throughout the teen years is critical—teens' desire for independence can bring opportunities for unhealthy or unsafe behaviors.

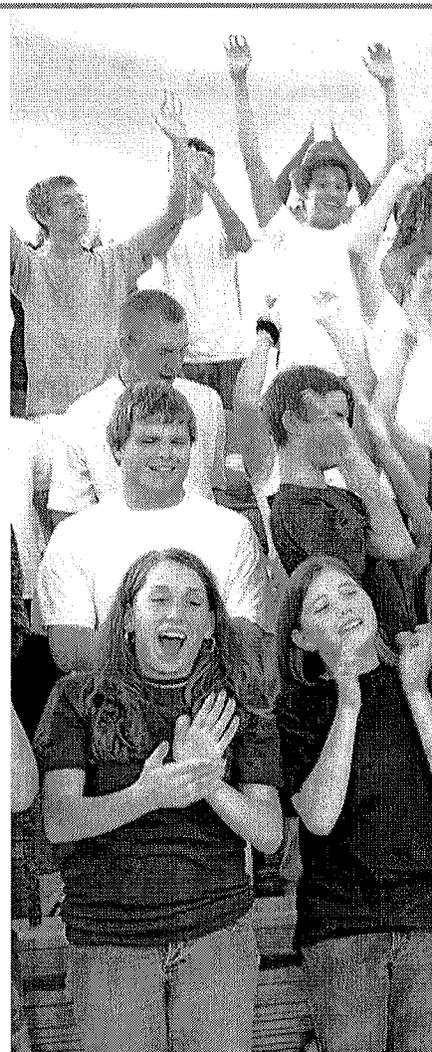
Does parental monitoring make a difference?

Yes. Research shows that teens whose parents use effective monitoring practices are less likely to make poor decisions, such as having sex at an early age, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, being physically aggressive, or skipping school.²⁻⁶ Clear communication about your expectations is especially important. Research shows that teens who believe their parents disapprove of risky behaviors are less likely to choose those behaviors.¹

What can parents do to monitor their teens effectively?

The following are some steps you can take to monitor your teen and help protect him or her from risky behaviors:

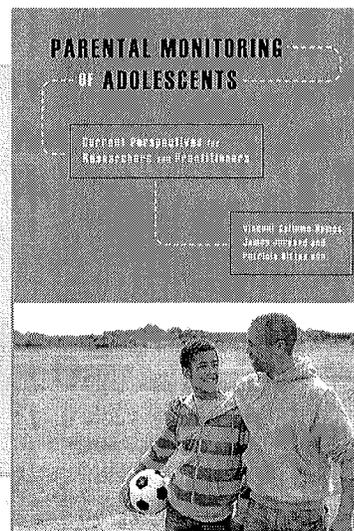
- Talk with your teen about your rules and expectations, and explain the consequences for breaking the rules.
- Talk and listen to your teen often about how he or she feels and what he or she is thinking.
- Know who your teen's friends are.
- Talk with your teen about the plans he or she has with friends, what he or she is doing after school, and where he or she will be going.
- Set expectations for when your teen will come home, and expect a call if he or she is going to be late.
- Ask whether an adult will be present when your teen is visiting a friend's home.
- Get to know your teen's boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Get to know the parents of your teen's friends.
- Talk with your relatives, your neighbors, your teen's teachers, and other adults who know your teen. Ask them to share what they observe about your teen's behaviors, moods, or friends.
- Watch how your teen spends money.
- Keep track of how your teen spends time online, and talk about using the Internet safely.
- Pay attention to your teen's mood and behavior at home, and discuss any concerns you might have.
- If your teen does break a rule, enforce the consequences fairly and consistently.
- Make sure your teen knows how to contact you at all times.



For more information

CDC scientists and other practitioners researched the effectiveness of parenting interventions aimed at reducing adolescent risk behaviors. For example, the resource, *Parental Monitoring of Adolescents: Current Perspectives for Researchers and Practitioners*, provides research and techniques for productive supervision within the home.

<http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14080-5/parental-monitoring-of-adolescents>



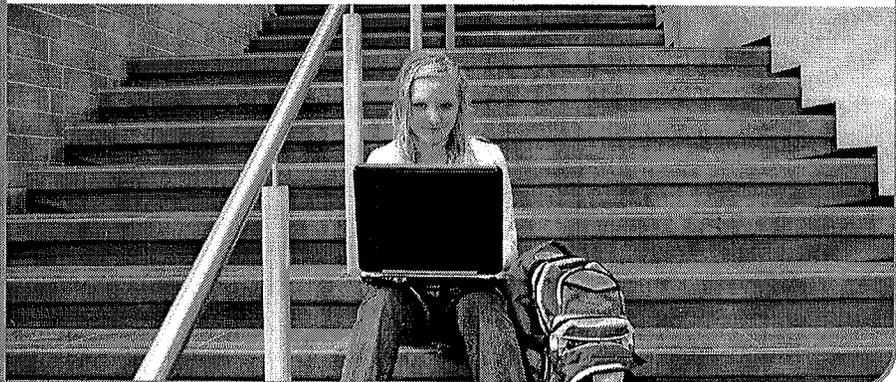
How can parents be successful at monitoring their teens?

Parental monitoring works best when parents have good, open, and caring relationships with their teens. Teens are more willing to talk to their parents if they think their parents can be trusted, have useful advice to offer, and are open and available to listen and talk. Teens who are satisfied with their relationships with their parents tend to be more willing to follow the rules.

You can promote a caring relationship with your teen by listening, asking questions, asking for opinions, offering support and praise, and staying involved in your teen's life.

How can busy parents monitor their teens?

As a parent, you face many competing demands on your time. Work or other activities can keep you away from home and limit monitoring of your teen. To help bridge this gap, you can use e-mails, text messages, and phone calls to check in with your teen. You can also seek the support of other family members, friends, and school staff to help monitor your teen's activities and behavior. Teens who have a variety of adults supervising and monitoring their activities may be even less likely to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviors.



Where can parents get more information?

- **CDC Parent Portal—Raising Healthy Teens**
www.cdc.gov/parents/teens/healthy_children.html
- **Positive Parenting**
www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive/index.html
- **Parents of Teens**
www.usa.gov/Topics/Parents_Teens.shtml
- **Girl's Health Information for Parents and Caregivers**
www.girlshealth.gov/parents
- **National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy**
www.teenpregnancy.org
- **Latino Initiative**
www.thenationalcampaign.org/espanol/default_eng.aspx
- **Healthy Children, Teen Information**
www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/default.aspx



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