

Exercise for Teenagers

You come home every day from work and there he is, sprawled out on the couch half dozing in front of the television. After dinner he's in his room, sort of doing homework and sort of chatting online. You hardly see him throughout the weekends but not because he is out and about. Every now and then you knock on his door just to make sure he's still breathing and remembered to shower and still recognizes your face.

He is beginning to remind you of an unemployed spouse who is amply satisfied to lay about and collect unemployment and do absolutely nothing else. You have visions in your head of him ten years from now, still living in his bedroom behind drawn shades and emerging every once in awhile to eat before returning to his mole hole. You long for the days when he used to tap at your hip begging to go and play, and it takes such self restraint not to yell at him, "Would you just go out side and play?!"

Long gone are the days of playing pretend outside and running around in a heated game of tag with his friends. He no longer has to choose which one of his friends he's going to be involved with for the day because they are all at his disposal online.

At the very best it is just an annoying habit that will hopefully be short lived. At the very worst it is a sign of depression and is a silent plea for help. Kids need to exercise. For their mental health and their physical health they need to get out and get active. Encouraging a child who has become technologically dependant isn't the same as convincing a seven year old to run outside to play.

You don't want to become your child's drill instructor. Dragging them out of bed at four in the morning when it is cold, rainy, and just plain way too early, is a good way to turn them away from daily exercise habits. Enticing them into physical activity is easier on you, them, and anyone who has the misfortune of getting in their way during a four A.M. run.

Start small. Grab the kid and the dog and head out for a brief walk. One mile is a good start. Do this for a week or two and you'll be able to communicate a little more as his eyes readjust to sunlight. This will also help you to determine whether he is just going through a phase or is suffering from depression.

Encourage him to get back into sports he loved as a little tike. Even if it's just a few pick up games at the local club or park, at least he is out there exercising. If he has moved on, try getting him to sign up for a new sport or try one that he has always wanted to try but never got around to. Forcibly signing him up will only deter him from future attempts and you may find him back in hibernation before you know it.

Schedule a few evening hikes on a nearby trail or try taking him to a few sporting events that you think might inspire him. Don't be afraid to talk about the eventual effects of long term hibernation such as obesity and depression and loneliness. Let him know you're trying to help him figure it out and he can take a few random shots before committing to anything.

Exercise does not have to come in a disciplined form, such as joining the basketball team or playing soccer. It can be something that he prefers doing on his own like weight training or running, though probably not at four in the morning. Some teenagers really get into those video workout plans they have on television infomercials. While they are targeted at adults, they are high quality exercises that produce strong results in shorter time frames.

Recommend he try something he never thought he would get into, like dance lessons. There are dance studios that teach the latest in dance without any training in ballet. While some teenager balk at this notion, others really go for it once they try it. There are so many options out there these days that everyone should be able to find something they enjoy and that is good for their body.

While it may take a lot of nudging to get your teenager to come out of hibernation and rejoin the active world once more, their health is worth every painstaking argument it takes to get them up and moving.

Above all, set a good precedent for them to follow. If you are lying around on the couch all weekend, how is your child supposed to realize the importance of exercise? Get yourself out there and moving and they are more likely to join you.

This information was compiled by

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