

Dealing with today's teen issues

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Imagine growing up in the second millennium: Your best friend just got a nose ring, tattoos abound in gym class, and classmates talk about everything from hair styles to homosexuality in Internet chat rooms. Add raging hormones, a need to rebel, and peer pressure, and teens have the potential for making mistakes that could affect the rest of their lives.

The world has changed so quickly that parents often don't recognize the pitfalls awaiting their teens. You may be shocked and confused by your teen's completely unfamiliar world. Help your teen to make good choices by understanding the daily pressures he or she must deal with. Don't isolate yourself from his or her reality out of fear or feeling uncomfortable.

Be aware and informed about your teen's activities.

- Stay involved—know your kid's friends and their parents, what they do in their spare time, and where they are. This doesn't mean you should grill or nag your teen; rather, you should show interest and demonstrate that you care about his or her general welfare.
- Remember to listen, listen, listen. The best way to find out the issues your teen faces is to keep discussion open and listen to what he or she talks about. Avoid the 2 Ps—patronizing and preaching—when talking to your teen.
- Support his or her interests. Ask questions about which subjects and activities excite him or her and try to expand on them. For example, if your daughter loves to draw, consider visiting a museum to expose her to other art forms.
- Don't panic. Just because your teen expresses a desire for something you disagree with, don't jump to conclusions. For example, if your teenage daughter wants to get a tattoo or a navel ring, it does not mean she is on drugs and on a downward spiral. If she gets good grades, has good friends, and responsibly juggles a full schedule, she is likely just trying to express her individuality—separating herself from her parents by trying to identify with her peers—and a navel ring is one way of doing that. Regardless of the solution, as her parents you need to attentively listen and try to understand your daughter's viewpoint. Be willing to say: "The problem is ours. These things worry us. Can you help us deal with this?"
- Seek compromises. While parents need to set clear boundaries about what is acceptable to them, teenagers often rebel against parental dictates and absolutes. A navel ring may be one way your teenager tests her limits. As a compromise, you might offer more acceptable ear piercing or temporary tattoos.
- Set clear limits about the Internet. The Internet can create its own set of problems, many of them serious. A majority of teenagers now have Internet access—which

virtually brings the world into your home, including pornography, hate propaganda, and intense advertising. Chat rooms can be especially dangerous because they are anonymous and teens may not realize they are communicating with a predatory adult, and because it is difficult for parents to monitor them. Limit the amount of time you allow your child to be online, use filters or other parental control features, and monitor your teen's online activity. Teens need to understand that talking to people in chat rooms is the same as talking to strangers, so they should never give out any personal identifying information and never agree to meet someone they have met online.

This information was compiled by <http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/parenting/teens-preteens/bonding/today-teen-issues>