

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Booker T. Washington High School
Dr. Curley White

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BUILDING CHARACTER

Research shows benefits of inner strength

Two teens face the same problems. Both have a parent in jail. Both live in a tough neighborhood. One ends up in trouble, but the other goes to college. What made the difference? Studies show that some teens develop the inner strength to stand up to problems they face in life. This strength helps them make responsible choices. These teens have:

- **Adult role models.** Teens need mentors who care about them, believe in them and set a good example.
- **Reading skills.** In addition to being educational, books help kids escape to other worlds. Sometimes this offers much-needed hope.
- **Answers.** Teens have lots of questions. They need to know where to find answers, such as with parents, coaches or teachers.
- **Hobbies and interests.** Teens who take part in extracurricular activities often feel better about themselves.
- **Career goals.** Studies show that job success is the highest priority of successful teens. It's the lowest priority for teens who struggle.
- **Ways to give.** Volunteering helps teens see that they can change things for other people—and themselves.

Source: Jami L. Jones, "Building Resiliency," www.askdrjami.org/resiliency/resiliency.html.



REINFORCING LEARNING

Build writing skills that last a lifetime

Writing is a skill that will benefit your teen throughout school—and throughout life. Following a few basic guidelines will help her develop key writing abilities. For example, she should:

- **Limit paragraphs to one idea.** Begin with a topic sentence that explains the main idea. Put details about the main idea in the following sentences.
- **Use an "active" voice** if possible. "The boy ate the apple" sounds stronger than the passive, "The apple was eaten by the boy."
- **Be specific.** Don't make readers guess about meaning. "The movie was long and boring" is better than "The movie didn't do much for me."
- **Keep it short.** Each word should tell the reader something. Take out unnecessary terms.

Source: William Strunk Jr., E.B. White, & Roger Angell, *The Elements of Style*, ISBN: 0-2053-0902-X (Longman, 212/782-3300, www.ablongman.com).

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Encourage science skills

Good scientists often have certain traits. For example, to boost success in science, encourage your teen to be:

- **Curious.**
- **Open minded.**
- **Observant.**
- **Organized.**
- **Willing to learn** from mistakes and try again.

Source: Michael H. Popkin, Bettie B. Youngs and Jane M. Healy, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School: A Guide for Parents of 4 to 14 Year Olds*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8 (Active Parenting Publishers, 1-800-825-0060, www.activeparenting.com).

ENCOURAGING READING

Make reading irresistible

Teens are so busy with school, sports, jobs and friends that reading can fall by the wayside.

You know reading is important, but nagging your teen to read doesn't always work. Instead, keep exciting materials around, such as magazines and books about her hobbies.



TALKING & LISTENING

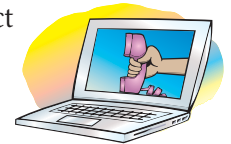
Build bonds through email

Many teens use the computer to stay in touch with friends. But it can be a good way to connect with parents, too.

Sometimes teens email parents about topics they might not discuss in person. Use the computer to:

- **Share** positive thoughts. Send jokes, stories and caring notes.
- **Mention** exciting ideas. Forward your teen a picture of a cool vacation spot.

Source: Neil I. Bernstein, *How to Keep Your Teenager Out of Trouble and What to Do If You Can't*, ISBN: 0-7611-1570-6 (Workman Publishing Company, 212/254-5900, www.workman.com).



QUESTION AND ANSWER

What are logical consequences?

Q: I've heard that "logical consequences" help when disciplining teens. But how and when should I use them?

A: Logical consequences are results that happen naturally or simply make sense. For example, if your teen doesn't turn in homework on time, she gets a lower grade. If she misses curfew often, she has to stay home. Logical consequences are great for teaching responsibility. When using them:

- **Ask for your teen's opinion.** Get her involved in creating fair solutions. You may be surprised by her ideas.
- **Explain your teen's choices.** "Either you come home on time, or you can't drive the car on Saturday." "When you finish your homework, you can go out."
- **Stay firm, yet calm.** If you're too angry, an argument may start. If you're too wishy-washy, your teen may take advantage.
- **Give choices one time.** If your teen doesn't comply, enforce the consequence. Make it clear that you mean business.
- **Expect testing.** Teens see what they can get away with. Things will probably worsen before they improve.
- **Give second chances.** Use consequences, but also tell your teen there will be new opportunities to get things right.



Source: "Effective Discipline: How to Raise a Responsible Teen," Active Parenting of Teens Video Library, (Active Parenting Publishers, 1-800-825-0060, www.activeparenting.com).

PARENT QUIZ

Are you helping properly with projects?

Teens should do their own research projects. But there are ways parents can be supportive. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping appropriately.

- ___ **1. Do you advise** your teen to pick interesting topics with plenty of available resources?
 - ___ **2. Do you help** your teen divide large projects into small parts?
 - ___ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to take organized, informative notes?
 - ___ **4. Do you suggest** that your teen keep his assignment sheet handy so he meets every requirement?
 - ___ **5. Do you offer** to proofread your teen's papers before he writes final drafts?
 - ___ **6. Do you compliment** your teen's hard work and progress?
- How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means you're helping your teen succeed independently on research projects. For each *no* answer, try to change your answer to *yes*.

"Gold has a price, but learning is priceless."
— Chinese proverb

NEXT STEPS

Get involved when your teen schedules classes

Teens get choices about which classes to take, and sometimes parents aren't sure how much advice to give. Course decisions can have a major effect on your teen's future, so you should be involved. Talk with the guidance counselor if you need advice. Have your teen join you. Make sure your teen takes classes now that will give him more choices later.

HOMEWORK

A breathing exercise helps teens focus on homework

Teens these days go in many directions at once. But when it comes to studying, their minds need to be focused.

If your teen has trouble with this, suggest that she do breathing exercises before starting homework.

Have her breathe in slowly from the nose while letting her stomach expand. Then she should breathe out slowly while letting her stomach contract.

Suggest that she do this at least five times.

Source: Eugene Schwartz, *How To Double Your Child's Grades in School: Build Brilliance and Leadership in Your Child—From Kindergarten to College—in Just 5 Minutes Per Day*, ISBN: 0-7607-1193-3 (Barnes & Noble, 1-800-843-2665, www.barnesandnoble.com).

WELLNESS

Prevent sports injuries

Sports are a great way for teens to stay healthy—unless they get hurt. Then they miss school, too. To keep your teen in the game:

- **Research** safety tips.
- **Insist** that your teen wear protective gear.



Source: Andrea Marks, M.D. and Betty Rothbart, *Healthy Teens, Body and Soul*, ISBN: 0-7432-2561-9 (Fireside Press, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

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