

Inventory for Parents of Teens

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There has been much research conducted on what constitutes effective love and guidance for teens. For example, the 2001 Harvard College report entitled *Raising Teens* provides a summary of over 300 research and practice documents. Below is an inventory of attitude and action items that can help you assess and develop your skills.

Please print this inventory before scoring. Give your attitude, words and behaviours a score between 1 and 5.

Score guideline:

1= never 2= seldom 3= sometimes 4= most of the time 5= always

Teen Development

1. I realize that teens are going through great physical, intellectual, and psychological changes.
2. I understand that teens are naturally clumsy because their bodies are growing inconsistently—hands and feet may be disproportionately large.
3. I accept that teens have intense sexual energy, insecurities and body pre-occupation.
4. Young Women: I realize that early maturation can be a disadvantage in the early teen years while late development may be an embarrassment to older teens. Teen girls worry about breasts, hair and facial features.
5. Young Men: I realize that early physical strength and development gives peer status. Teen boys worry about muscle mass and the size of their penis.
6. I do not make an issue of eating, weight or physical size or shape.
7. I model good eating and exercise habits.
8. I do not take my teen's mood swings personally.
9. I understand that teens typically see themselves as invincible and participate in some high risk behaviours.

Communication

1. I communicate love and appreciation daily.
2. I use humour where appropriate.
3. I avoid lecturing, advice giving, name-calling, sarcasm, judging, put downs, yelling, advising, moralizing, blaming and pleading.
4. I speak respectfully in "I" statements sharing my thoughts, feelings and expectations (around treatment of siblings, teachers, peers, property and myself)

5. I set limits (clearly saying what I will and will not do) on which I ***follow through.***
6. I ask for my teen's opinions and thoughts on matters from movies to politics.
7. I share an appropriate amount of private information with my teen.
8. I do not pry with multiple questions my teen's life.
9. I listen attentively.
10. I seek to understand my teen's point of view and feelings before asking to be heard.
11. I use open ended questions to support effective problem solving.
12. I am comfortable agreeing to disagree with my teen.
13. Though I choose my battles wisely I am willing to say, "No, you do not have my permission."

Self Esteem and Emotions

1. I accept that teens' physical, intellectual, and psychological changes affect emotions.
2. I openly listen to the expression of all feelings.
3. I accept that anger outbursts may be part of this challenging time of transition.
4. I help my teen understand the challenges of intense feelings that arise.
5. I avoid taking personally teens' criticism of my actions and choices.
6. I know my teen's favourite songs, books, TV shows, movies, hobbies and people.
7. I know my teen's closest friends.
8. I know what my teen considers her biggest weaknesses and strengths.
9. I know what concerns my teen.
10. I actively support my teen's interests.

Family Life

1. I listen to my teen's feelings of jealousy, frustrations and disappoints about siblings without taking sides.
2. I put limits on sibling aggressiveness.
3. We have regular discussions (family meetings or some other forum) to deal with grievances, solve problems and plan meaningful activities.
4. Chores have an element of choice.
5. Rules are few, clear and evaluated regularly.
6. I acknowledge that teens need more alone time and privacy.
7. I accept that teens distance themselves from parents, spend less time with them and more with their peers.
8. I create connection to my teen's friends' parents and check periodically on "gang" activities.

9. I do not take personally my teen's embarrassment of me in particular situations.
10. We have meaningful family rituals and celebrations while not necessarily expecting my teen to participate.

Discipline

1. My teen is involved in deciding appropriate behaviour guidelines.
2. I keep my end of agreements by calmly following through.
3. I expect my teen to be accountable for keeping or breaking her agreements.
4. I do not rescue or bail out. I consider mistakes learning opportunities.
5. I make it safe for my teen to give me honest information.
6. Expectations of my teen are age and ability appropriate.
7. I have clear limits around movies, music, video games and TV watching.
8. I have clear limits around the use of profanity.
9. Because of the culture we live in I do not make a big deal out of the occasional profanity.

Responsibility and Independence

1. I accept that my teen will make mistakes.
2. I support my teen in learning from mistakes.
3. I avoid conflict over little annoyances. I invite my teen to problem solve.
4. My teen has some money available to learn the responsibilities around spending.
5. I compromise around a messy room, arrange for a periodic clean up and know that it is not a big deal in the big picture.
6. I avoid doing for my teen what my teen can do for herself.
7. I award and compliment increased independent thinking, behaviour and self-initiative.

Peers

1. Because we have strong family values and connection, I feel comfortable having my teen choose his or her own friends.
2. I welcome my teen's friends into our home.
3. I expect teens to spend more time on the phone at this stage and am willing to make a workable arrangement.
4. I have accepted that my teen may dress in ways that challenge my taste.

Sex, Drugs and other Transitional Issues

1. I understand that many teens today are sexually active.
2. I am ready to make my opinion of pre-marital sex clear and explain why.
3. I am comfortable and ready to talk about healthy relationships, intercourse,

reproduction, ejaculation, masturbation, menstruation, body parts such as penis and vagina, and sexually transmitted diseases.

4. I am ready to talk about drinking, smoking and drugs with accurate information.
5. I am prepared to seek community support should sexual activity, drug use or other risk taking behaviours go beyond typical teen experimentation.

How to use the above scores:

- **Scores 4 and 5:** For each item that scored a 4 or 5 congratulate yourself and keep up your awareness, support and guidance.
- **Score of 3:** For each item that scored a 3 consider how you might increase your knowledge or frequency of parental connection.
- **Scores of 1 and 2:**
 1. Circle each item that scored 1 or 2.
 2. Beside each circled item write what you will do to improve this score. To change your belief and/or habit you might read a parent education book, take a class or reach out to community supports.
 3. Celebrate that you are committed to improving your performance as a teen's parent.

Note: Consider inviting your teen to also score the above items. Then engage in a discussion about the items you agree, disagree and would like to modify.

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