

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Educational Talent Search
Eastern New Mexico University

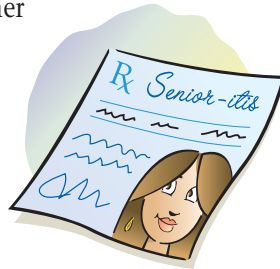
March 2010

COPIING WITH ADOLESCENTS

Keep teens motivated in spring

She doesn't want to go to school—especially not to her first-period class. She's pretty much stopped doing homework. And she doesn't want to follow your rules—she says, "I won't have a curfew next year."

What's wrong? Chances are, your teen has come down with "senior-itis." This "disease" usually strikes seniors in their last few months of high school—but *all* teens can exhibit some symptoms of "senior-itis." To survive this phase:



- **Choose your battles.** There are some rules you shouldn't relax. ("I know you don't want to go to school. But your attendance is still very important—so get up.") However, does it really matter if your teen makes her bed after school instead of before?
- **Offer your teen some "grown-up" experiences.** She might be able to intern in an office one afternoon a week. This is a good way for a teen to try out a career (and shows her that she doesn't know *everything* yet.)
- **Let your teen know that grades can't slip too much.** Colleges really do change their minds if students' grades drop drastically. And seniors can't graduate if they've missed the entire last grading period.
- **Talk with other parents.** When you realize that yours is not the only teen who is acting this way, you may relax a little.
- **Try to enjoy it.** The teen years pass quickly. Make the most of the time you have together under one roof.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Send your teen to school ready to learn

Simple things you do at home can help your teen succeed in school. To prepare your teen for a successful day in class, make sure he:

- **Gets enough sleep.** Most teens need eight or more hours of sleep to concentrate well the next day.
- **Eats breakfast.** Studies show that students who eat breakfast are more alert and achieve more than students who skip the "most important meal of the day."
- **Completes homework.** Reading the assigned pages helps students get more out of class lectures and discussions. Working problems reinforces skills.
- **Is organized.** Putting books and papers in his backpack before going to bed will ensure that they get to school the next day.
- **Leaves on time.** Students who arrive late miss valuable learning time.

HELPING TEENS COPE

Weekly plans work well

Does your teen have a packed schedule? If so, encourage him to pick a few top priorities each week, such as studying for a test, practicing baseball, and being home for family dinners. He should block out time for these first. After that, he can add other activities.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, ISBN: 0-7624-1474-X (Fireside, a division of Simon & Schuster, www.simonandschuster.com).

ENCOURAGING READING

Check for comprehension

It's homework time. Your teen is reading a textbook. When she's done, she closes it. She finished reading the assignment—but did she *comprehend* it? Have her ask herself:

- **Can I name** the main ideas presented in the chapter?
- **What are the** supporting details for these concepts?
- **How does this** information compare with what I've learned in the past?
- **Do I understand** the conclusions presented in the material?



DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Train your teen's brain

Teen brains are still developing.

The part of the brain that develops last helps teens think through the consequences of their actions. Teach your teen to think before he acts. "What will happen if you don't turn in your report on time?" "What will you do if there's drinking at the party?" And remember, if you think your teen is about to make an unsafe decision, you can always say *no*.

Source: Robert Sylwester, *The Adolescent Brain*, ISBN: 1-4129-2611-4 (Corwin Press, www.corwinpress.com).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents give test advice?

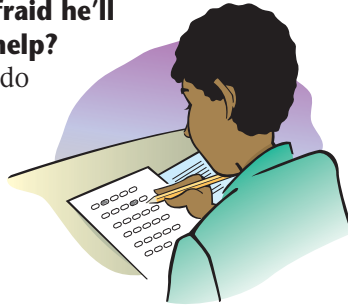
Q: My teen studies, but he's still anxious before a big exam. And now, with the SATs coming up, I'm afraid he'll be too nervous to do his best. How can I help?

A: These tried-and-true test tips may help. To do his best, tell your teen to:

- **Read the directions** carefully. He may lose points if he doesn't follow the directions exactly!
- **Skim the questions** before he begins.
- **Read the entire question**—and all of the answer choices—before responding.
- **Look for words** like *not*, *only*, *except for*, *all of the above*, or *none of the above*.
- **Realize that only one answer** is the “best” answer. There may be more than one technically correct answer in a multiple-choice question, but only one answers the question most completely.
- **Answer the questions** he's sure of before moving on to those he is less sure of.
- **Restate complicated questions** in his own words.
- **Answer every question**—unless he'll lose more points for an incorrect answer than for not responding.

Remind your teen that he has worked hard to prepare and that you're confident he will do his best.

Source: “Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking,” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html.



PARENT QUIZ

Review communication in your home

Teens can be secretive creatures. While you can't force your teen to communicate, you can do things to keep the lines open. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how you're doing:

1. **Do you know** where your teen is at all times? If she's out with friends and plans change, does she know to call to tell you?
2. **Do you spend** some time each day with your teen? “Hanging out” time—preparing dinner, in the car, watching TV—is often when communication happens most naturally.
3. **Do you go** to your teen's school events?
4. **Do you encourage** your teen's friends to spend time at your home—while you're there?
5. **Do you try** to plan regular one-on-one time with your teen? Do you work together to plan your activities?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're creating ways for your teen to keep in touch. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“Two monologues do not make a dialogue.”
—Jeff Daly

ENCOURAGING WRITING

Look for writing errors

Careless errors can lower your teen's grade on a writing assignment. Have her look for:

- **Penmanship.** Is her writing neat and easy to read?
- **Capital letters.** Did she use them at the beginning of each sentence and for proper names?
- **Details.** Does her essay include interesting examples? Is there support for the main idea?
- **Punctuation.** Do sentences end with a period or question mark? Are commas used correctly? Did she use apostrophes in contractions such as *it's*?
- **Spelling.** Did your teen confuse words like *there* and *their*? Did she accidentally use “texting language” like *thru* or *btw*?

MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

Organization can motivate

The science project seems overwhelming and your teen just wants to give up. Stop the moaning and groaning by having him divide the project into step-by-step tasks. Then have him give himself “due dates” for each task. Getting organized may be all it takes to get him started on an award-winning project.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Stress excellence, not perfection, for your teen

You want your teen to *do her best*. That's different than wanting her to *be the best*.

Insisting on perfection is unrealistic and harmful. Remind your teen that mistakes don't mean she's a failure. They can even mean she took a brave risk and learned from it.



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