

# Parenting Adolescents

## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BRANCH OUT, WHILE KEEPING THEIR ROOTS

**Parenting adolescents can be a challenging task.** Adolescents are experiencing great physical, emotional, and intellectual growth. It's a wonderful time, yet it also can be a disruptive time. Teenagers are moving from childhood to adulthood and reaching out for independence with skills that haven't been proven. Parents can help ease the transition and insure a positive future relationship with their teens by keeping the following information in mind.

**Maintain a positive outlook.** Remember, adolescence is temporary, and your attitude can help your teens develop and maintain a good self image, confidence, and competence. It's normal for teens to suddenly become critical of their family. They are trying to break away and need an excuse. Enjoy helping them discover their talents and interests.

**Establish clear, simple rules.** Your teens are experimenting, and just as you had to protect them from danger when they were young children, you need to protect them now. Part of what your adolescents need to know is that they have a responsibility to their family and community. Continue enforcing family rules, although it may be a good time to review your rules to see if they are still practical.

**Keep the lines of communication open.** This is one of the most important tasks you have. Most teens don't know how to communicate. Really listen to them and avoid judgmental responses. Seek outside help to solve problems instead of risking the loss of your relationship with your teens.

**Be patient.** Your teens may not be comfortable with themselves. Their bodies and emotions suddenly seem strange, and their new skills are not perfected. They may be very critical of themselves and need your support and love.

**Praise good behavior.** Remind them that you think they are wonderful. Help them remember they are valuable people.

**Evaluate your own attitude.** Your teens' push for independence may trigger an equal but opposite response from you. Their independent behavior may make you aware that there isn't much time left for you to teach them everything they need to learn from you. Don't begin to lecture or become too controlling. It will only add stress to the situation.

**Get professional help if your teen's behavior has gotten out of control.** A good counselor often is the key to helping parents and their teens get over rough spots.

**Remember, you are the most important influence  
in your adolescent's life.**

*From Prevent Child Abuse America, 1-800-CHILDREN or [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)*

*Adapted for the 2005 PAM Organizers' Packet*