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TOP TEN TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TEENAGERS

- 1. Be the kind of adult you want your kids to become.** Actively decide to lead by example. Really think about what you do and say (and how you say it) every day.
- 2. Save your energy for important issues.** Try to avoid knee-jerk or instinctive reactions, especially if you often disagree. Rather than react immediately, pause to think about whether the issue is important in the long term, and about other ways to respond.
- 3. Remember their brains are easily switched to 'high alert'.** Avoid triggering your teenager's automatic 'fight or flight' response when you want to talk to them. Ask them if it's a good time to talk; sit down; use a calm, gentle voice; find out more about their feelings.
- 4. Timing is everything.** Only talk about problem issues when everyone's calm and relaxed, not busy, stressed or in a hurry. Schedule a meeting, and agree beforehand that as a family, you will calmly explore issues so you can all get along better.
- 5. Learn a new language.** Break the habit of speaking to your teenager as you did when they were younger. Try chatting with them more like you would with a work colleague or acquaintance. Share ideas, offer choices, negotiate; value their contribution.
- 6. Teach risk-evaluation skills.** Prompt your teenager to think about potentially risky situations ahead of time, and to consider the likely outcomes of various choices. Rather than lay down the law, ask 'what if...' questions and help them to come up with possible options and action plans.
- 7. Stay in touch.** Have regular positive conversations about day-to-day activities so you know what your teenager is doing, and keep up to date with new technology. Ask them to show you what they're interested in and how it works.
- 8. Involve them in making decisions.** Allow for change as they become older. Help them take on new responsibilities. Be flexible and let them have a say wherever possible. Hold family meetings so they can contribute ideas and have their opinions heard and valued.
- 9. Turn the 'need for novelty' and peer group acceptance into a positive.** Help your teenager find supervised group activities they enjoy. Regular activity – even if it's not sport – and good eating and sleep patterns are vital for physical and mental health. Limit screen time appropriately.
- 10. Be a safe sounding board.** Teenagers' emotions are often intense, and they're struggling to find their place in the world. Encourage them to discuss new ideas and values at home, without rejection or ridicule. Help them figure out problems and possibilities.

More information: www.triplep-parenting.net