



## Helping Your Teenager Handle Increasing Responsibility and Freedom

Although every adolescent is different, there are many experiences common to the teen-age years. The most common may be the pull and push between dependence and independence.

It is important for parents to make rules for their young children. As children get older, however, they need to learn to make some of their own decisions and life choices. Teens need the chance to practice good decision-making skills, and to manage new life experiences. Parents need to give teens the freedom to do just that, but teens must be ready. They need to agree to behave in responsible ways and show that they can handle the freedom. They also need to keep their parents informed. That way, parents know when to lend guidance and supervision, and how to support their teen's progress.

That's where respect, responsibility and reliability come in.

- **Respect:** Give your teen the respect that you would like to be given. Give

him credit for his knowledge and abilities; pay attention and listen to him. That means showing confidence in your teen, and being supportive.

- **Responsibility:** Teens are learning to take care of themselves as they prepare for adulthood. Give your teen an appropriate amount of freedom and independence. Encourage and promote responsibility and good decision-making, offering support and gentle help with difficult decisions. Let your teen know she can gain more freedom as she demonstrates increasingly responsible behavior.
- **Reliability:** Part of growing up is learning and adapting to rules. Teens will test the rules, but over time most will make these rules part of their lives. This kind of reliability is worthy of recognition and praise. When you can rely on your teen to behave responsibly, it may be time to give him more freedom.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration

Call ValueOptions today.  
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