

Strengthening Parent-Teen Relationships

in a Challenging World

HAKIM SHOOSHTARI

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST

Teenagers in the 21st Century

2

- ▶ Century-old education systems (formal and nonformal) rapidly becoming outdated; **24-hour exposure to information** and ideas
- ▶ Fewer kids per family
- ▶ Internet has fostered a **global community** at the touch of a button

Types of Parental Concerns for Teenage Children

- ▶ Delinquent behavior – damaging property, crime
- ▶ Youth conflict and aggression – fighting, suicide, emotional anger
- ▶ Sexual involvement – pregnancy, STDs
- ▶ Substance abuse – alcohol, tobacco, drugs
- ▶ Depression and isolation
- ▶ Achievement in school
- ▶ Money management, career preparation

IDENTITY

- Who am I?
- Who do I want to be?
- Which group do I fit into?
- What am I good at?



EMOTIONAL NEEDS

- Acceptance
- Attention
- Appreciation
- Encouragement
- Affection
- Respect
- Support
- Comfort
- Approval
- Security



Four Keys to Strengthening Parent-Teen Relationships

- ▶ Connectedness
- ▶ Regulation and monitoring
- ▶ Healthy decision making and autonomy
- ▶ Positive peer group relationships

Key 1 – “Connectedness to Parents and Family = Healthy Teens”

- ▶ Adolescents who express a **sense of connectedness to parents** and family are at reduced risk for unhealthy behavior
- ▶ What does “connectedness” mean?
- ▶ Key components **are feeling** close to parents/family; feeling **cared for** by family; feeling **satisfied with family** relationships

Parental Influence – The Role of Connection

- ▶ Connection = A positive, warm, stable emotional bond between parent and child
 - ▶ Connection **develops trust** – youth
 - ▶ **understand expectations**, “What would Mom say?”

- ▶ Connection develops **self-worth** – youth who feel this value themselves,
- ▶ it **lessens their need for seeking attention** or approval in risky behaviors
- ▶ Connection develops **social confidence** –
- ▶ teens are more able **to engage in positive social interaction**

Developing Connection

- ▶ Express affection frequently and openly to children – hugs, approval, etc.
- ▶ Express encouragement and interest – talk to children, support activities
- ▶ Spend time in shared activities, including recreation, work, etc.
 - ▶ strengthens relationships
 - ▶ requires intellectual and creative effort
 - ▶ promotes moral behavior

EATING TOGETHER



Time Out For Parents The Teenage Years

positiveparenting
Publications & Programmes

Connectedness to Other Adults and School = Healthy Teens

- ▶ Connectedness to other adults – the child feels noticed and cared about
- ▶ Other adults often are the parent of a best friend, and can include a teacher, coach, minister, neighbor or other adult with a meaningful role in the youth's life
- ▶ Connectedness to school – feel they belong at school, feel cared about and noticed

WHERE DO YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK THEIR IDENTITY?

- Their role in the family
- Status symbols
- Celebrity and sports stars
- 'Grown up' behaviour
- Cliques and gangs



Key 2 – “Parental Expectations About Behavior = Healthy Teens”

- ▶ **General high expectations** about behavior are protective, from parents, school and community – avoid “**permission giving**” attitudes or “**normalization**” of poor behavior
- ▶ “Late” expressions of expectation have little effect on behavior – **express early and often**
- ▶ **Clear expressions** of high parental expectation (e.g., get good grades) actually **reduce emotional stress in youth**
- ▶ Setting clear expectations for behavior is called “**regulation**” and **encouraging good behavior** is “**monitoring**”

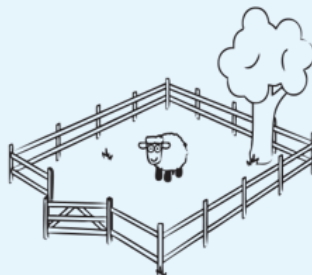
House Rules

- We will phone home if we're going to be late.
- Every family member needs to take a share of the household chores.
- We treat each other with respect.

Do what
you're told



Freedom
within limits



Do what
you want



AUTHORITATIVE PARENTS

- Try to understand child's point of view and are willing to negotiate.
- Voice their concerns.
- Accept temporary unpopularity.
- Aim for a win-win solution.
- Choose their battles.

Parental Influence – The Role of Regulation

- ▶ Regulation = **Placement of structure** around a child's behavior through rules, monitoring, etc.
 - ▶ Regulation helps teens learn what behaviors are **acceptable** vs. not acceptable
 - ▶ **Parental regulation** assists personal regulation – youth learn to regulate their **own emotions and behavior**
 - ▶ Regulation **protects from negative outside influences**

Developing Regulation

- ▶ Engage youth in establishing family rules and arranging consequences – family meetings, etc.
- ▶ **Enforce consequences** when rules are broken – abide by clear standards
- ▶ Spend time with and talk to youth
 - ▶ Who will you be with?
 - ▶ What will you be doing?
 - ▶ Where will you be? When?

LOGICAL, SMART CONSEQUENCES

SMART consequences need to be:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

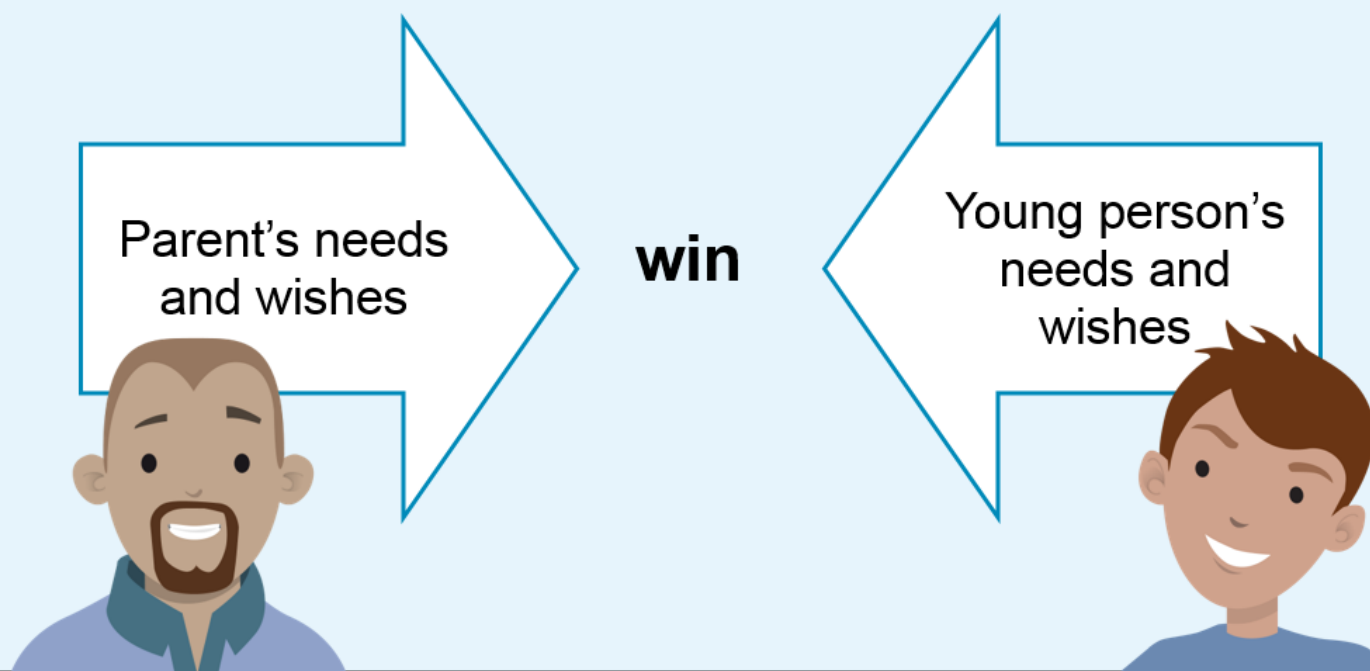
Realistic

Time-bound

HOW TO NEGOTIATE

1. Stick to the main issue.
2. Try to understand their point of view.
3. Say what you feel and what you would like to happen.
4. Ask how your teen feels and what they would like to happen.
5. Discuss options and try to find a win-win solution.

THE AIM OF NEGOTIATION



Youth Perception of Parental Disapproval of Misbehavior

- ▶ Youth who **clearly perceive parental disapproval of risky behavior** are more likely to avoid or delay it
- ▶ Bad news – almost no relationship exists between parental communication of disapproval and teen perception of it unless:
 - ▶ Youth **feel connectedness** to the parent = three times more likely to perceive disapproval
 - ▶ Youth **perceive a clear rationale** for disapproval, a moral basis

Key 3 – “Decision Making and Autonomy = Healthy Teens”

- ▶ Psychological autonomy = A child's **capacity to think and decide critically** and independently from parents
 - ▶ Independent decision making helps youth **identify and express their feelings and ideas**, and deal with their many feelings
 - ▶ Independent decision making helps **youth think critically** – youth can think consciously about behavioral **consequences**
 - ▶ Make decisions – youth can make personal decisions and **resist negative peer pressure**

Developing Healthy Decision Making and Autonomy ²⁵

- ▶ Encourage independent thinking and respect child's ideas
- ▶ Validate feelings of the child
- ▶ Express unconditional love
- ▶ Avoid withdrawing love from youth to coerce behavior
- ▶ Avoid guiltmaking to control behavior

Key 4 – “Positive Peer Relationships = Healthy Teens”

- ▶ Youth fit into a “friendship framework” – (1) best friends, (2) close friends, (3) clique, (4) leading crowd, (5) the school
- ▶ **Best friends are much less influential** than the network of close friends = **peer “culture”** –
what is the group that your child hangs out with involved in doing?
- ▶ The relationship of your teenager’s friends with you, as parents, also is important. Do **they know and trust you?**

Developing Positive Peer Relationships

- ▶ Provide a positive, friendly atmosphere for peers of your children as they come to your home
- ▶ Get to **know the parents of your teenager's** friends and communicate with them about expectations
- ▶ **Assist and coach** your child in making friends, keeping friends and appreciating friends

“Four Positive Parental Behaviors to Strengthen Relationships with Teens”

- ▶ Sharing dinner or other regular meals
- ▶ Democratic parenting and involvement of youth in decision making about their lives
- ▶ Parental monitoring of behavior
- ▶ **Consistent involvement** through shared activities and conversation

Positive Parental Behavior No.

1 = Sharing Dinner or Other Meals

- ▶ Youth who share **five to seven dinner meals** a week are significantly less likely **to use drugs or be sexually active** than those sharing a dinner meal less than five times a week
- ▶ **Communication, sharing feelings, give and take of advice, support, etc.**

Positive Parental Behavior No. 2 = Democratic Parenting

- ▶ “Democratic parenting” refers to parents who involve youth **in joint decision making about their own lives**
- ▶ Youth involved in families with democratic parenting are significantly less likely to be involved in unhealthy behaviors

Positive Parental Behavior No. 3 = Parental Monitoring

- ▶ “Parental monitoring” refers to **supervision of a youth’s behavior**, such as setting curfews, approving choice of friends, monitoring media, etc.
- ▶ Parental monitoring has **most impact** on reducing substance use and first sexual activity

Positive Parental Behavior No. 4 = Consistent Involvement

- ▶ Teenagers appreciate and benefit from the “connection” that develops when parents **engage in shared activities** with them on a regular basis
- ▶ Opportunities for parents and teens to talk and discuss **important values and concerns increase with consistent involvement** and time together

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

A teenager with low self-esteem is more likely to:

- Put down their talents and abilities
- Avoid trying new things
- Blame others for their shortcomings
- Find it hard to tolerate frustration
- Feel emotionally indifferent
- Be influenced by others

GOOD SELF-ESTEEM

A teenager with good self-esteem will be able to:

- Take pride in what they do
- Act independently
- Assume responsibility for their actions
- Tolerate frustration better

Communication



Time Out For Parents The Teenage Years

WHY CONFLICT IS NORMAL



THE PROBLEM



'I' MESSAGES

When you...



I feel...



Because...



What I'd like to happen next time.

BLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION

- Asking too many questions
- Being bossy
- Lecturing
- Criticising and shaming
- Jumping to conclusions
- Threatening and shouting
- Always knowing best



