



# LIVING WITH TEENS

*You Can Do It,  
With Time  
And Patience*

Adolescence can be a trying period for both parent and teenager. Many dilemmas—the wide variety of choices, intense pressures to succeed, and the availability of drugs and alcohol—can complicate a teenager's life. With time and patience, you can assure that this period is rich and rewarding for your family. You can create an environment for growth.

## What Is Adolescence?

By the age of 13, most children are breaking away from their families. Friends appear to have more influence than parents. The young teen is taking care of himself or herself more and more.

Two opposing viewpoints can start friction.

1. You may not be ready to let go. You worry that your child won't benefit from your experience. You're concerned about what friends may pressure your teen to try or do.

2. Your teenager sees a big world outside your home. New activities and interests may not be shared with family members. It's time to start thinking about an individual identity. It's time to experiment, test the limits, explore and search for oneself.

## A Loving Interdependence

The basis for a positive relationship with your teenager starts with an understanding of your interdependence. You may see your responsibility as caring for your child. Your child, as you see it, needs to learn that the way to becoming his or her own person is by respecting and following your guidelines.

## Being There

In helping to develop your teen's judgment and sense of personal

responsibility, you need to be a loving guide. This means being there at all hours to listen, to answer questions and to offer positive support.

It might help to recall what you went through as a teen. You may remember that part of the process was scary. At the same time you were feeling independent, you may have felt highly vulnerable.

For most teenagers, setting limits helps them to feel more secure in the long run. The trick is to establish and enforce your limits with mutual understanding and respect.

## Setting Limits

Your program for providing the best environment you can for your teenager's passage into adulthood may include:

1. An attitude of specific expectation. You should agree on reasonable rules for living together.

2. An ability to let go when the situation is not harmful. Experience can be the best teacher.

3. Positive reinforcement whenever possible. Teens, in trying to prove themselves, need all the support you can give.

4. A stable point of reference. Consistent, fair treatment and logical consequences provide the best framework for getting along.

5. Recognition of your own limits. Drug and alcohol abuse, or self-destructive behavior, can be beyond your ability to help. Seek professional assistance as soon as you need it.

You can teach responsibility if love and trust are the basis of your relationship. A positive attitude, realistic expectations, and open communication can help you succeed.



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