



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
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**September 9, 2009 – Positive Parenting of Teenagers**

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Adolescence can be a very difficult time for both parents and teens. It is a teenager's life task to establish their own identity and to separate from parents. This can lead to strained relationships and often conflicts. It is not unusual for a parent and adolescent to develop a negative pattern of interacting with each other. Here are some tips to improve your interactions with your teenager:

\*Let the first thing that comes out your mouth when you get home be positive. As parents, we are often tired when we come home and can be easily set off by what we perceive as the perpetual laziness of our teenagers. I remember how frustrated I would be with my own teenagers when I came home from a long day and found the dishes not done, backpacks and shoes sprawled all over the house, teenagers sprawled all over the house, and Jerry Springer on TV. If necessary, allow yourself to decompress before you enter your home. Driving around the block one more time while you think of something good to say may help.

\*Try to make quality time for each other, doing activities that your teenager enjoys. This should be a time in which you conscientiously try to enjoy their company. Criticisms and nagging should be avoided.

\*Learn to identify and seek out exceptions to problems rather than focusing on the problems themselves. For example, if your teenager comes home past curfew six out of seven nights per week, focus your attention on the one time in which your teenager came home on time. Identify what was different about that time, both in your teenager and in yourself. Build upon those differences and make them happen more frequently. For example, there may have been something different about how you as the parent reminded your teenager of their curfew time.

\*Send a “Sandwich Message” with an “I Message” in the middle. An I message is a means of conveying your thoughts and feelings in a less accusatory tone and does not attack the individual as a person. Example: “(Insert the person’s name)”, when you do (insert problem behavior), I feel (insert how it makes you feel). To make the I message a “sandwich”, say something positive about the individual’s behavior both before and after the I message.

\*Try to find, and possibly, reveal, the good qualities about your teenager. Consider the following quote by Goethe: “If you treat an individual... as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be”. This quote reminds us all that if we recognize the potential in the other person, and treat them as if they were already achieving that potential, that the individual will rise to our expectations.

As mentioned previously, living with teenagers can be a challenge. I encourage you everyday to try one of the strategies mentioned. If you do so, you will find your relationship with your teenager will become more peaceful, enriched, and enjoyable.

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