



Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers
Tip Sheet #3: Helping Your Teen Make Good Decisions

Throughout their teenage years, your teen will be faced with difficult situations every day. Most teens struggle to make safe and healthy decisions due to peer pressure, and lack of skills or knowledge. Good decision making skills can aid to your teen's success later in life. Below are some tips to help your teen learn how to make good decisions:

1. **Identify the problem.** Allow your teen to describe the problem in their own words. Be sure to ask questions to gain clarity about the problem or situation; avoid questions that foster "yes" or "no" responses. Really listen to what your teen is saying to understand their worldview.
2. **Talk with your teen about choices.** Encourage your teen to identify their options. Sometimes teens believe they don't have choices in the outcome of certain problems, but with time and encouragement, they can see alternatives that may be smarter or healthier.
3. **Review the pros and cons.** Challenge your teen to write a list of their options down and identify the pros and cons of each one. Discuss how writing those down can help to see what option is the best choice. Explain the consequences of different choices and help your teen make a decision.
4. **Provide guidance.** Be willing to give input when necessary, but learn how to step back and let your teen think through things on their own. Convey to your teen that you want to help but won't try to control the situation.
5. **Allow your teen to make a decision and carry it out.** As long as their safety is not in danger, try allowing your teen to make their own choice and deal with the consequences. Teens will make mistakes, but with a parent there to support them, they can learn from it.
6. **Examine whether the choice was effective or not.** Discussing this can help your teen learn and assist in making better decisions in the future. Be open and understanding so that your teen feels comfortable coming to you again when they need help.