



Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers
Tip Sheet #4: Balancing Independence and Responsibility

Working with your teen towards growth and independence can be difficult as you try to navigate through providing enough support while allowing the right amount of freedom. The process of “letting go” may seem impossible, but is a necessary step in helping your teen gain the capabilities needed to successfully navigate though life. Below are some tips on how to foster independence in your teen:

1. **Explain to your teen what it means to be independent and responsible.** This includes how to become independent and the new responsibilities that come along with it. Discuss situations with your teen, and ask how they think they will handle it. Asking, rather than telling, may help them to take responsibility for their actions and time.
2. **Avoid doing for your teen what they can do for themselves.** Take the time to teach your teen the skills they need to do things independently. For example, setting the table, doing laundry, or cooking a meal. Being able to contribute to the family will help them gain more confidence and become more responsible.
3. **Help your teen develop their talent.** Finding a talent and helping your teen expand on it can also encourage independence. Motivate your teen to get involved with their interest, and try their hardest to become disciplined. Feeling a sense of competence may also help with your teen’s self-esteem.
4. **Give your teen control over their bedroom.** Privacy is also a part of independence. Allow your teen to decorate, have ownership, and control over who is allowed in. Make it clear that being in charge of their room comes with responsibilities such as cleaning, vacuuming, and laundry.
5. **Allow your teen to choose their own fashion style.** Let your teen make age appropriate choices when it comes to their self-expression. This will allow your teen to feel like they have some control over their life and that you respect their unique identity.
6. **Talk to your teen about what to do in an emergency.** Prepare your teen to be able to deal with safety and emergency situations. Unexpected events can happen and you won’t always be with your teen.