

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



February 2019

Cotulla Independent School District

Share strategies to help your teen say *no* to negative peer pressure

As high schoolers become more independent, it becomes more important for them to make responsible decisions. Knowing how to stand up to negative peer pressure is an essential part of the process.

Arm your teen with a variety of strategies for saying *no* to things she knows are wrong—or just not right for her. Your teen can:

- **Give personal reasons.** “I’m working hard to make the varsity team. I don’t want to screw up my health or my record with drugs.”
- **Talk about what could happen.** “Sorry, the last person who got caught doing graffiti was suspended from school. I can’t risk that.”
- **Be dismissive.** Your teen can simply roll her eyes, shake her head and walk away.
- **Suggest another activity.** “I was planning to see a movie tonight. Want to come with me instead of going to that party?”
- **Try a little pressure of her own.** “Do you really want to smoke weed? Everyone will think you are a druggie.”
- **Stay away.** Someone who repeatedly tries to expose your teen to possible trouble isn’t a friend. Suggest that she consider avoiding the person, at least for now.



Provide a balanced outlook on grades

It’s easy for parents who want the best for their students to focus on grades. Grades matter, but they aren’t the only indicators of future success—and they can be a significant cause of student stress. To keep grades in perspective:

- **Avoid sending your teen** the wrong message. Sometimes teens think their parents want them to get good grades at any cost—which can lead to cheating.
- **Encourage your teen** to strive for personal excellence rather than perfection. He should try to do *his* best, not be *the* best.
- **Make it clear** that your love for your teen doesn’t depend on his report card. Tell him how proud you are when he finishes a challenging project or improves his grade in a tough subject.
- **Remind your teen** that while the competition is stiff to get into select colleges and universities, there are many wonderful schools out there. Assure him that you will work with him to find one that’s a great fit.

Start a file for the future

Keeping a college and career portfolio is a great way for your teen to prepare for college or job applications. Help him create a file where he can record information about his:

- **Academics**, including his classes, grades and plans to meet requirements.
- **Activities**, including dates and leadership positions he’s held.
- **Accomplishments**, including any awards he’s earned, such as honor roll.

Does the rule fit your teen?

High schoolers are all different, and so are the rules their families need to set at home. But asking these questions can help you set appropriate rules for your teen. Ask yourself:

- **Have I given my teen a say?** Ask your teen for his input. Then you can make the final decision. 
- **Will this rule boost** my teen’s independence? Within limits, your teen needs chances to make choices and live with them. 
- **Do I follow this rule?** Set an example for your teen. 
- **Does my teen understand** the consequences for violating this rule? 

Time lines help your teen see the point of history

Time lines help students understand the relationships between historic events. Encourage your teen to create time lines for the eras she’s studying. Have her:



- **Identify boundaries.** When did the period begin and end?
- **Add key events.** She should summarize what happened, when and where the events took place and who took part.
- **Include illustrations** that can help her visualize how events unfolded.



How can I teach my teen to stop putting homework off?

Q: My son is smart, but he's a procrastinator. He usually puts off projects and assignments until the night before they're due, and then has to rush through them. His grades are suffering. What can I do to help him stop this?

A: Procrastination—like many poor study habits—can have serious consequences, and your teen needs to kick this habit before he gets to college or the workplace. To help him:

- **Find out what's behind it.** Ask your teen why he puts things off. Is he afraid he won't perform well? Does he like the thrill of racing as time runs out? If you aren't sure how to handle his concerns, suggest he meet with his school counselor.
- **Encourage your teen to divide** large projects into smaller tasks. Then have him work backward from the final due date to set a deadline for each task. He may still wait until each deadline approaches to do that part, but once he finishes a task, he may find that it's easier to keep working. And bit by bit he'll get the project done.
- **Help your teen relate** his assignments to his long-term goals. For example, learning how to manage time and meet deadlines with quality work will help him be more successful in school and after graduation.



Are you teaching your family's values?

Parents play a significant role in shaping their children's values. As your teen approaches adulthood, are you modeling and teaching her to value the things you think are important? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you make** the most of everyday opportunities to discuss your values with your teen?
- ___ **2. Do you put** your values into action? If you value compassion, for example, are you kind to others?
- ___ **3. Do you spread** your values in your community—by volunteering or helping a neighbor, for example?
- ___ **4. Do you compliment** your teen when you see her acting on your values?

- ___ **5. Do you point out** people who are practicing their values?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are instilling your family's values in your teen. For each no, try that idea.

"A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both."

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

Multiply math skills

Success with math requires effort every day. Share these three proven strategies with your teen to improve math achievement:

- 1. Read ahead.** If the teacher will go over Chapter 4 tomorrow, have your teen read it tonight, then try to solve some problems. He'll find out what's confusing—and what to focus on in class.
- 2. Ask questions in class.** Remind your teen that if he has a question, others are probably wondering the same thing.
- 3. Find a study buddy** he can call to discuss problem-solving strategies.

Increase financial literacy

Research shows that most 18- to 24-year-olds don't have the money management skills they need to be financially stable. To build your teen's financial literacy, teach her about concepts like *interest*. For example, how much would she have to pay if she carried a balance of \$1,000 for one year on a credit card that charges 20 percent interest?



Source: "Many young adults lack financial literacy, economic stability, study finds," Science Daily, nswc.com/credit.

Speak up for languages

In a recent report, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences concludes that learning languages in addition to English is vital for the future of today's students. To support your teen's language-learning efforts:

- **Ask him to teach you** some phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Attend festivals** and cultural events related to the language together.
- **Encourage him to develop** his skills in your family's native language, if you speak something other than English.

Source: D.E. Davidson, "Why Study a Foreign Language When the Rest of the World is Learning English?" American Councils for International Education, nswc.com/languages.

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