

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

July/August 2025

N F A P A

6 WAYS TO SUPPORT FOSTER YOUTH

Written by Mira Ramirez

I was a young person in foster care until I aged out of “the system” at the age of 18. Then I was faced with a hard truth: not only was I not prepared to live on my own, but I also had not built a community or done the work to maintain what little community I did have. I wasn’t sure how to maintain relationships or boundaries within relationships to keep myself safe or mentally well. I stumbled a lot. I fell off the wagon of adulthood and fell behind my peers.

There was only one phone number I knew with certainty at that time: my mom’s. I called, and she answered. She continues to answer every time, even 15 years later. And she doesn’t just answer for me but for every one of the daughters that have come into her life. I met my mom and my family when I was 14. While they did not give birth to me, they have wiped the most tears off my cheeks. They have seen me fall so many times. And even when I was being what must have felt impossible at the time, they stood with me every step of the way. They celebrated every win with me. Today, when something good happens, big or small, they are the people I want to call. I was “Adult Adopted” on my 24th birthday. I walked into a surprise birthday dinner to find my family, my friends, my coworkers, and my whole community that I had built over 10 years. I couldn’t believe it! Never had I had such constant people in my life.

Young people need at least one caring adult in their lives to make a difference.

Navigating relationships is never easy. It can be a lot of work. But one thing is for sure – you must show up as authentic and willing to understand, just as you would be with your best friend. It doesn’t mean you should be their best friend — they need you to be an adult — but use that for a reference if needed. Young people need at least one caring adult in their lives to

make a difference. I was fortunate to be placed in a home with a caring adult. It wasn’t always that way, and there were some homes in which, looking back, I wish various foster parents had done more to help support me, but I now realize it may not have been that easy. So, here are six essential ways to support foster youth in your home and even when they are well into young adulthood.

1. Empower Personal Growth & Identity

Some of the hardest parts of our lives come in adolescence. It’s a time when everyone has, or will, spend plenty of time trying to figure themselves out. It is a confusing time

by any standard, even more so for a young person who has faced adversity. For youth navigating the foster care system, many cards have been stacked against them, but one thing has been proven to help. You – the people who are foster parents, caregivers, and caretakers. Cooking meals with my foster mom was some of the best times at home. I felt involved and



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Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Questions? Interested in becoming a member of the Board?

Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/July-Aug-2025>

We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. List 3 areas where most bullying occurs.
2. Fill in the Blanks. We often get stuck in patterns with our tweens and teens that fuel the _____ and _____.
3. List six ways to help your tween/teen who refuses to go to school.
4. Fill in the blanks. If you suspect your child is _____, it's important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible.
5. Fill in the Blanks. Prevention isn't just about acting before your child even considers trying a _____. It is also about taking quick action before _____.
6. True or False. Try to promote decision-making in an emotionally charged situation.
7. True or False. Anger is a critical emotion that gives us important information.
8. Fill in the Blanks. Young people need at least _____ in their lives to make a difference.
9. Fill in the Blanks. Guide them in clearly communicating their _____, _____, and _____.
10. True or False. If your child is aware of someone who is being bullied, encourage him or her to notify someone and get help.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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empowered. On the nights it was just the two of us cooking, we used those moments to have heart-to-heart talks that helped us bond. It's been more than ten years since I have lived with her, but I still cook some of the dishes she taught me.

2. Be the Foundation for Your Foster Child

You can be a potential foundation for young people to start building on. This is important because no matter how shaky the building may be or how hard the bricks fall when they fall (when, not if), it will be much easier to start building again if there is a constant they may have never had before. They need you, and they need you to be exactly who you are.

3. Look for Learning Moments

An awesome opportunity to authentically show up for your young person is to support their transition into an interdependent adulthood. No one can do life alone! Look for things that are natural learning moments that you can share together. Make a meal together. Go for a walk together. Watch a TV show together. The possibilities are endless when you think about how day-to-day life is full of teachable moments for someone who may not see it so clearly.

For example, a flat tire may seem like a bad day for most of us, but imagine how many things go into changing a flat tire that can create teachable moments to share. There is:

- Budget Establish if we have the money to do this ourselves, or call a professional to fix the leak or get a new one.
- Resources What do you do when there is no or very little money to work with?
- Appointment Scheduling What time works best for you with what you have to do and what you need to get done?
- Time Management What time was the appointment you were on your way to, and what may you need to move around to get there on time?
- Delegating Flat tires do not happen when you have nowhere to go! Can you delegate delayed responsibilities while dealing with the tire?
- Communication Skills What happens if you can't make that appointment now? Some calls may need to be made.
- Familial Support Sometimes you have to call Dad or Mom. Sometimes you have to be the dad or mom they call.

Nothing humbles like a flat tire on a highway! But show young people how to move through life with humility. I still call my dad anytime I have a flat, and I can even call my mom if needed. (Although her first response is usually "Call Dad.") If they can't help, who do I call next? Who do you call? There are so many moments, and no one will move through all of life with grace. If we fly, we may fall. You show us how to get back up, but most importantly, how to fall safely so we can get back up. Help us create a safety net to help push us back up if we can't get up on our own.

4. Establish Clear Expectations

Another way to be authentic while showing up for your young person is to be clear about what you expect in different situations. Touch your nose! What do you picture when you read that? A finger touching a nose? What if I expected you to use a blue pen while wearing a glove and touching your nose? Did you do all of that? No? Well, that is too bad. Now you need to go pack all your bags and move out of your house by tonight. What? Not fair, right? That is how unstable the system can be for some young people. Be clear. No one likes invisible expectations. Save time on miscommunications. Less miscommunication = more time to spend on the same page. At times, young people will push you and your expectations to the boundaries. They may teach you just as much as you teach them. And behind every moment will be the same question – how far along this road will you be riding with me?

5. Ensure Stability & Long-Term Support

Young people going through life regardless of adversity, but especially because of it all, crave the same thing: a lasting connection. People are not disposable. They are meant to be there for the long ride. Would you jump out of a car going 80 miles per hour? Me neither! Don't leave young people in the middle of a spin-out. Show them how to slow down. And if they need it, offer to take the wheel and let them catch their breath in the passenger seat! As long as they know that you are somewhere in the car, even if the music is blasting and both of you are too angry to talk, show them that you are there. And make sure they know that they always have a spot in your car! Try to avoid decision-making in an emotionally charged situation. And most importantly, show them that not every goodbye means forever and not every goodbye has to be bad; sometimes things do not work out, and it is okay to walk away in a way that is meaningful and healthy.



6. Strengthen Community & Connections

Family comes in all shapes and sizes. They are custom-made for us. They are the people we decide to let into our lives. Young people are no different when it comes to picking friends. Do you have that one best friend? We all have that “I have a favor to ask” friend. Who is that friend you are painting a house with, or the friend who will help you fix a leaky sink (or help you call a plumber)? Regardless of whether your community is a small, tight-knit group or if it can fill a stadium, help young people find their friends, too. Show them how to stay connected to their community. Take them to church, the local skate park, the bank to open their first bank account, the local community college, or sign up for a karate class. Anything can be a teachable moment. Life has a way of handing us some hard lessons, but with just one person rooting for you, you can get through almost anything! Lean on your people, and be someone others can lean on, too.

Think of these six essential things as spices in a soup. It is not the meat and the potatoes, but the spices that make the dish unique. They can help you and your young people work through things they will likely face moving into adulthood, but the meat and potatoes – that’s you. My mom wasn’t always my mom. She started as someone I could count on, who refused to leave, and even when I left, she kept the door open. Our relationship is beyond what “the system” could provide. It happened every day and over time, not all at once, and not just in foster care. A great part of our relationship started after I was 18, but that was because that was what I needed.

Every young person is different, and you can’t promise to always be their parent or caretaker, but you can promise to always keep that spot open in your car for them. If I could wish anything for young people in care, it is that they have someone like my mom and that they can feel safe long enough to accept that kind of love and support.

Just because your young person is navigating the system does not mean their life has to be run like a system.

This article was written by Mira Ramirez, a passionate advocate with lived experience in foster care. She has spent over a decade working with child welfare systems and nonprofits to uplift youth voices, promote healing, and share tools for understanding trauma and the adolescent brain.

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https://parentandteen.com/6-ways-to-support-foster-youth/?utm_source=th_fb_5_19_25&utm_medium=n_p&utm_campaign=facebook_AM&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR6bKtFk10EhA0jUQZ-rQjV0rsSZDxmjpBn7UZZuAI75vbBQn_3iYVtq_M9QA_aem_YQQekrmuCnOrYkED7A8Ztw



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE PERFECT PARENT TO BE A CYCLE-BREAKER

Written by: Megan Griffith

Editor's Note: If you have experienced emotional abuse, the following post could be potentially triggering. You can contact the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741741..

I am a cycle-breaker. I refuse to engage in the same toxic behaviors that I was raised with, especially when it comes to raising my son.

But that's so much easier said than done.

The thing nobody tells you about being a cycle-breaker is that there's a lot of pressure to be perfect. Part of your brain tells you that if you aren't perfect, then you're just as toxic as the people who came before you. But that isn't true. Here's what's true: every time you make the choice to show up, to try, you break the cycle of toxicity.

Every single time.

You Are Still a Cycle-Breaker When You Mess Up

A few weeks ago, my therapist said something that changed my life: relationships are about rupture and repair. A good relationship isn't one with zero stress or mistakes, it's one where both people can show up as themselves, even when that might cause conflict. And both people are willing to do the work to repair the relationship after these conflicts.

Rupture and repair.

This spoke to me because I grew up without any repair. Relationships ruptured and then I was expected to forgive and forget without any apology. So I became afraid of rupture.

Conflict was an exercise in self-abandonment. The only way to move on after conflict was for me to pretend I wasn't hurt.

So now whenever I make a mistake in my relationships, I feel immense guilt because I feel like I've put someone else

in that position of needing to abandon themselves. This guilt is especially strong with my son. Any time I make a mistake with him, it feels like I'm not breaking any cycles, I'm just perpetuating the harm I experienced.

But now I focus on the repair.

How to Repair a Relationship After Rupture

The first step toward repairing your relationships is to learn to pay attention to the ruptures. Notice when ruptures happen. If you have an overactive guilt complex, like me, you might be highly aware of even the smallest ruptures in your relationships. Instead of seeing this as a weakness, as being "too sensitive" or something, try to see this as a strength. You've got this first step nailed down.

The second step is to acknowledge the hurt that's been done and your role in it. This might be hard. So often when we have been the victims of a toxic environment, we're used to being the one getting hurt, not the one doing the hurting. We typically don't think of ourselves as having enough agency to hurt someone else, but we do have that power. That doesn't make us a bad person, it just makes us human.

Next, it's time to apologize.

This apology shouldn't be self-deprecating or self-loathing — actually, it should hardly focus on you at all. It should be all about the other person. The only aspect that should be about you is the part where you admit that you did something to hurt the other person. No more apologies that sound like, "I'm sorry you felt that way." Nope. Try, "I'm sorry I made you feel that way." Take responsibility.

Finally, take the time to evaluate how this rupture happened and what you can do to both show up as your full self and avoid causing harm. This step isn't about making yourself small to avoid conflict, though that will probably be tempting. No, this step is all about finding a way to be yourself and still show up for your loved ones. Your kids don't need a perfect parent or an anti-conflict parent; they need you, exactly as you are.

We Break the Cycle of Generational Trauma One Interaction at a Time

Generational trauma, the trauma that lingers from one generation to the next, passed down through toxic parenting styles and unhealthy coping mechanisms, isn't healed overnight. You might be a cycle-breaker, but you're still human.

Instead, generational trauma is healed in small ways through each healthy interaction we have with our kids and other loved ones. It's not a black-and-white, healed versus toxic dichotomy. It's a multilayered spectrum, and each time you make a healthy choice, each time you soothe yourself instead of lashing out, each time you choose to listen to yourself rather than abandon yourself, one small part of the spectrum shifts toward something healthier.

If you made 10 bad decisions today, if you had 10 big ruptures in your relationships, but you chose to heal one of them, you're taking steps in the right direction. It might not feel like it, but you are. Celebrate those healthy choices, celebrate the ways in

which you are breaking the cycle, bit by bit.

If you want to be a cycle-breaker, but you're scared and feel like you can't do it, take a minute to sign up for my personal 5-day Finding the Courage to Try email challenge. I think you'll get a lot out of it.

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https://themighty.com/topic/trauma/toxic-parenting-childhood-trauma-break-cycle/?fbclid=IwQ0xDSwK_50BleHRuA2FibQlXMQABHsYUV7zDqMCWaeOzrQxPHfH6G9dNiuY_3yUqCSWSUrmQeuzaxK50GQCLNmRZ_aem_X-wjbG7z98Qfn-dNVzz9cg

DEALING WITH SCHOOL REFUSAL

Written by: Sheryl Gould

What do you do when you can't get your tween or teen to go to school?

School refusal can be one of the most frustrating and concerning challenges for parents. Whether it's driven by anxiety, social issues, academic struggles, or a simple push for autonomy, a tween or teen who refuses to go to school can leave parents feeling helpless. While this can be difficult, there are things that you can do to approach the situation with both compassion and firm expectations, helping your child work through their challenges while making school attendance non-negotiable.

1. Stay Calm and Avoid Power Struggles

It's easy to react with frustration when your tween or teen refuses to go to school, but arguing, yelling, or threatening won't solve the problem. Instead, take a deep breath and approach the conversation with curiosity:

- "I notice you've been struggling to get to school. Can you tell me what's going on?"
- "What's making it hard for you to go today?"
- "How can we work together to make school feel more manageable?"

By staying calm, you create a safe space for your tween or teen to open up rather than digging their heels in further.

2. Don't Make Staying Home Fun

One of the most important things to remember is that home should not be more enjoyable than school. If your tween or teen refuses to go, avoid allowing them to play video games, watch TV, or have access to their phone and social media during school hours. Instead, implement clear expectations:

- If they stay home, they must rest, complete schoolwork, or do quiet activities like reading or journaling.
- No electronics or entertainment until after school hours.
- If possible, they should complete any missed assignments at home.

By making school refusal feel less appealing, you reduce

the temptation to stay home just because it's easier or more enjoyable.

3. Identify the Root Cause

School refusal is rarely just about not wanting to go. There is often an underlying issue that needs to be addressed. Some common reasons include:

- Anxiety: Fear of failure, social anxiety, or separation anxiety.
- Bullying: A fear of being mistreated or excluded.
- Academic Struggles: Feeling overwhelmed by assignments or a lack of understanding.
- Social Issues: Struggles with friendships or peer pressure.
- Sleep or Health Issues: Exhaustion from poor sleep habits or an underlying medical issue.

Try to identify patterns. Does your tween or teen refuse on certain days (like when they have a test or social event)? Are they complaining of physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches? These can be signs of stress or anxiety.

4. Work with the School for Support

Once you have a better idea of what's causing school refusal, reach out to the school for help. Depending on the situation, options might include:

- Talking with the school counselor or social worker.
- Requesting a meeting with teachers to discuss concerns.
- Exploring academic accommodations if needed.
- Looking into a 504 plan or IEP for anxiety or other challenges.

Many schools have resources in place to help kids who struggle with attendance, but they can't help if they don't know what's going on.

5. Use Gradual Exposure for Anxiety-Related Refusal

If anxiety is the driving factor behind school refusal, a gradual return plan may be helpful. Instead of expecting them to go back for a full day immediately, start small:

- Have them go for a half-day or a specific class they enjoy.
- Arrange for them to check in with a teacher or counselor upon arrival.
- Offer a reward system for successful attendance.

Small steps can help build confidence and reduce anxiety over time.

6. Consider Professional Support

If school refusal persists despite your best efforts, professional support might be necessary. A therapist or counselor can help your tween or teen develop coping strategies for anxiety, social stress, or academic struggles. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is particularly effective in treating school anxiety.

7. Stay Consistent and Keep Expectations Clear

One of the biggest mistakes parents make is being inconsistent with school expectations. If your tween or teen refuses one day and faces no real consequences, they're more likely to try again. Be clear that attending school is not

optional. If they refuse to go, set expectations such as:

- Making up any missed work at home.
- Early bedtime if they miss school due to "not feeling well."
- No access to fun activities during school hours.

Resources for Parents

If you're struggling with school refusal, these books and blog posts offer valuable guidance:

Books:

- The Explosive Child by Ross Greene – A great resource for understanding behavior struggles.
- Helping Your Anxious Teen: Positive Parenting Strategies to Help Your Teen Beat Anxiety, Stress, and Worry by Sheila Achar Josephs PhD
- Helping Your Anxious Child by Ronald Rapee – Offers practical strategies for parents.
- What to Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner – A helpful workbook for kids with anxiety.

School refusal is a challenge, but with patience, consistency, and the right support, most tweens and teens can overcome it. By setting clear expectations, addressing the root cause, and working with the school, you can help your child build resilience and confidence to face their fears.

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<https://momsoftweensandteens.com/what-to-do-when-your-teen-refuses-to-go-to-school/>



HERE ARE 5 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO RESPOND TO DISRESPECTFUL TEENS.

Written by: Sheryl Gould

Be Curious About the Need Underneath the Disrespect

The question for parents is not so much, "How do I make you stop?"

The more important question is, "What are you telling me right now – about what you think, what you feel, and what you need?"

ESTABLISHING AND BUILDING TRUST WITH TEENS IN FOSTER CARE

Establishing and building trust with your teen is perhaps the most important thing you can do for him and with him. He needs to learn how to trust someone, not only for you and your family while he lives with you, but also for him now, and in his future. He will need to learn how to trust others in the future for him to transition into a healthy adult. Trust will be essential for him as an adult to have healthy relationships with others, to establish friendships, and for employment and career opportunities.

As we have seen earlier, trust takes time. Let's look at what the bestselling book *The Foster Parenting Manual: A Practical Guide to Creating a Loving, Safe, and Stable Home*. The *Foster Parenting Manual: A Practical Guide to Creating a Loving, Safe, and Stable Home* says about trust:

Perhaps the most important step you can take in helping your foster teen is building trust with him. This will take time, and you will have to have patience; do not expect him to come to your home trusting all you say and do. Give him space and allow him time to learn to trust you. Do not make promises to him that you are sure you are unable to keep. Once a promise is broken by you, it gives him further evidence that he cannot trust you. Talk to him on a personal level; find out what his interests are and encourage him to pursue those. Show interest in him, as well as in his biological family. Help him enroll in after school clubs and activities. Help him to research possible careers for him when he graduates from high school and inform him that dropping out of high school will have severe negative consequences for him. Encourage him to express his feelings and emotions to you, as well as to a counselor, if necessary. He will need to

learn that expressing his feelings is natural and healthy instead of keeping them inside.

Remember the eye rolling we talked about? When it does happen, or when he might make those mean and snide comments, disobey you, or break your family rules, it is important that you do not respond likewise. Instead, it is important that you remain calm, avoid yelling, and avoid being aggressive to the teen placed in your home. When he is trying to argue with you, or raising his voice to you, try to keep your own tone and intensity of your voice lowered.

Be aware of your own stress levels, and if you feel that you are not in control of your emotions, or feel that you may become angry, take a time out. Let him know that you need to step away, and that you will be happy to discuss the matter with him after you have been able to find the calm and the patience that you both need.

Another way to help your troubled teen is to look at his situation from a different perspective. Try looking at what is troubling him not from the perspective of an adult, or as his foster parent, but instead through the eyes of a teenager in today's world. In other words, from his perspective. When you do this, it allows you to gain insight into what might be troubling him, insight into what might be triggering his actions and emotional responses. This might help you to respond differently and help bridge the communication gap better.

Today's teens crave some sort of sense of belonging. Help him find it in your own home, and with your own family.

-Dr. John DeGarmo

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<https://www.drjohndegarmofostercare.com/blog/establishing-and-building-trust-with-teens-in-foster-care>



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association



FREE Virtual In-Service Training

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Registration Required!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFAPA_In-Service_Oct_2024-Sept_2025

Date	Title & Trainer	
Sept 13, 2025	De-escalation Training: Understanding the Arc of Escalating Behaviors By Jaclyn Kodosky, Families Rising	
Questions? 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org Facilitated by NFAPA. Sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services.		

All behavior is driven by a need, and if we can look at their behavior with curiosity (And I KNOW how hard this can sometimes be!), we can discover the blind spots that can reveal the need.



Dr. Ross Greene, a clinical psychologist, has worked with children and families for over 30 years. In his book “The Explosive Child,” he shares the following:

“Challenging behaviors can be summarized in one sentence: “Behaviorally challenging kids are challenging because they’re lacking the skills to not be challenging.”

So when your kid acts rude, disrespectful, and defiant, your first questions to ask yourself are these:

“What might I need to understand about my kid?”

“How do I respond in ways that support and equip my tween/teen to develop the skills that they need in light of who they are and the unique needs they have?”

They may be disrespectful because...

They don’t have the skills to articulate what they need.

Here are some examples:

You fight over homework constantly:

- They may have difficulty staying focused
- They don’t think yet about cause and effect
- Or they may have a learning difference and need to be evaluated.
- They may get easily overwhelmed.

They may fight to go to school:

It may be that they struggle with anxiety and lack the social skills to know how to enter groups, fit in, or connect with people.

They seek attention in inappropriate ways.

They need positive attention and must learn to seek attention in appropriate ways. They may have difficulty understanding how their behavior is perceived or impacts others.

When you understand how lacking skills or needing attention can be the underlying reason for disrespectful attitudes and behaviors, you

can take the behavior less personally and respond with greater compassion. This doesn’t mean there aren’t consequences – clear boundaries are still important. The focus should be on addressing the underlying need and teaching them better ways to communicate or cope.

Rather than focusing on the behavior, you can begin to **address the need** underlying the behavior and be proactive in how to best support them.

Become Aware of Your Patterns in the “Disrespect Dance”

We all have our own coping mechanisms, often learned from our families, that influence how we react to our children’s emotions.

We often get stuck in patterns with our tweens and teens that fuel the arguing and disrespect. If we want to change things, we need to recognize our patterns of responding to our kids and how we manage and express our own emotions.

Here’s how to break the cycle:

Self-reflection is key.

Take time for honest introspection. Ask yourself:

- What are my emotional triggers? What situations or behaviors from your child typically cause you to react strongly?
- What are my go-to responses? Do you tend to get critical, withdraw, or become overly controlling?
- How might these responses be impacting your kid?

Identify your patterns.

Look for recurring themes in your interactions. For example, do arguments often escalate because you both raise your voices?

Consider the needs behind your patterns.

Perhaps your need for control stems from a fear of your child making mistakes, or maybe your critical nature stems from a desire for them to succeed.

If you’re too strict or controlling, you may need to become more tuned in to emotions, step back, listen, and validate more.

- If you micromanage, you may need to back it off.
- Or maybe you lack limits and want your kids to be happy and close to you, and they need limits and boundaries.
- If you’re a perfectionist, you may be critical and judgmental, and your kid may think, “Why even try?”

As a parent, it’s important you take a step back and evaluate your part in this repetitive dance with your kid. Ask yourself this question with honest introspection:

“What might I be doing to fuel the disrespectful behavior, the arguments, and the disconnection with my kid?”

Reframe Anger: It’s Not the Enemy

Many of us view anger as a bad emotion. We might think that anger is one feeling to avoid at all costs. Anger might have

been scary in our own childhoods, and for some, it wasn't allowed to be expressed at all.

But anger is a critical emotion that gives us important information. Often, disrespectful behavior is misdirected anger that stems from deep hurt or sadness.

The problem isn't the anger itself but how we express it. Yelling, name-calling, or slamming doors are unhealthy ways to communicate anger. The issue is that many of us haven't learned how to process our anger and talk about what is really going on and what we actually need. Learning how to communicate our needs effectively builds deeper intimacy and connection.

Anger is a signal. Anger alerts us when we need to address something that is bothering us. It can be a sign of hurt, sadness, frustration, or a need for boundaries. When kids express disrespect, anger could be bubbling over from a deeper issue.

If we are to help our kids deal with their disrespectful attitudes and behavior we need to allow them to express their anger and to get to what might be going on underneath the surface.

Ways you can help your tween or teen navigate anger:

Are they feeling anxious about something?

Are they afraid of missing out?

Are they overwhelmed?

Are they needing space?

Are they having friendship struggles?

Are they used to getting their way?

You don't need to know the answer, but be curious about what might be underneath their anger.

What you can say

You might say, "You sound really upset. Can you tell me what's going on?"

"I hear that you're mad. I think I understand why you feel that way. Can you tell me more about it?"

"Thank you so much for telling me how you're feeling."

Model dealing with anger responsibly.

This is when we want to let our kids borrow our prefrontal cortex!

When things are escalating, there are 2 ways we can deal with the behavior:

Join them in the fight- active amygdalas can stir up other amygdalas!

Smother the flames with some pre-frontal cortex: Stay calm and use self-control.

How do you do this?

Take a deep breath. Don't immediately respond. Slow things down. Don't allow them to take you off course. Hold steady. Wait for them to catch up.

You might say something like...

"I want to hear what you have to say – I can tell it's important to you. Can you speak to me calmly?"

It doesn't mean accepting disrespect or agreeing to whatever they want. It means being the one to gently lead them out of

the mess and into a space that's calm, loving, and clear of noise.

****In order to help our kids learn how to express their emotions responsibly, we must listen to what they are saying even if they aren't saying it the way we'd like them to.****

Instead, when they're upset, use reflective listening with empathy and validate their feelings:

- "It sounds like you're feeling angry at me."
- "I know you don't like it when I take your cell phone at night, and if I were you, I'm sure I wouldn't like it either."

Guide them in clearly communicating their feelings, wants, and needs.

Here are some things you might say:

"What's happening right now?"

"Can you tell me calmly what's going on?"

"What is it you want me to understand?"

When you give space to your tween or teen's anger over time, they often will get to the bottom of what is really going on.

Emotions are essential to effective communication.

When you do this, you are modeling to your tween or teen, which will help them to develop empathy and identify and manage their emotions. This is ongoing for both us and our kids.

Remember, they need outlets to express their emotions appropriately (and we do, too)

- If your child is sad, allow them to cry until they're done (this may come in waves).
- If they're angry, allow them to express their anger by using words, jumping, squeezing a pillow, or in another non-destructive way.
- I know parents who have a punching bag in the basement. We have a wiffle bat.

Be open to trying different things. But avoid shutting them down.

Deal with Disrespect Responsibly By Having Healthy Rules and Limits

Identify the challenging behavior. First, answer these questions:

- Where do you need to address challenging behaviors and attitudes and problem-solve before the "next time" arises?
- What can you let go of? What needs to be addressed?
- Is this a relationship issue?

Respect Yourself by Setting Boundaries

- Give a clear message about what behavior is not OK—"I won't engage when you're yelling, disrespectful, or name-calling."
- "When you calm down, we can talk about it, and I'm open to hearing your perspective."
- Tell them there will be consequences for specific behaviors: "When you start speaking disrespectfully to me, we will

leave the mall.”

Pick a good time to sit down and discuss what’s happening and the issue you’d like to address.

Here are the essential components you want to consider during this conversation with your kid.

- Talk about what you’re noticing is becoming an issue.
- Listen to what they have to say.
- Help them get in touch with what they want. When we are entangled in critical, blaming, or angry thoughts, it is difficult to establish a healthy internal environment for ourselves.
- Share your thoughts and avoid being defensive or reactive and what you want.
- Let your child have their say. Be open to hearing your child’s point of view. It’s always best to give our kids a chance to be heard and understood.
- When they’re done, you can talk.
- Be open about your feelings. This can help your child to understand why you want him to do or not to do something. For example, you might say, “I feel worried about your safety when I don’t know where you are.”
- Keep it simple. Less is more.
- Explain your view simply and briefly, making it clear that your main concern is for your child’s well-being.

I know this is a ton of information for you to process and implement when you are confronted with disrespect and defiance. I don’t want you to feel overwhelmed, so make these changes one step at a time. Come back to read these effective ways to respond to disrespectful teens as much as you need, to refresh yourself and remember, none of us are perfect! We are all learning and growing as parents, and you are going in the right direction because you love your kids and want the best for them.

This season of parenting is HARD for us all, so don’t ever feel like you’re alone. The progress we are all working on takes time and a lot of hard work. So make sure you take care of YOU and be patient with yourself in this process. Because you are reading this, I want you to know that you are doing an AMAZING job and want to learn, grow, and support your kid well. They are blessed to have you.

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<https://momsoftweensandteens.com/5-effective-ways-to-respond-to-disrespectful-teens/>

BULLYING

By Bullying Resource Center

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.

Bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Bullying has even been reported in online chat rooms, through e-mail and on social networking sites.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to take such harassment and punishment.

Children and adolescents who bully thrive on controlling or dominating others. They have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home. Children targeted by bullies also tend to fit a particular profile. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated, or have few friends. Victims may also be smaller or younger, struggle with self-esteem, have depression or anxiety, and have a harder time defending themselves.

If you suspect your child is bullying others, it’s important to seek help for him or her as soon as possible. Without intervention, bullying can lead to serious academic, social, emotional and legal difficulties. Talk to your child’s pediatrician, teacher, principal, school counselor, or family physician. If the bullying continues, a comprehensive evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional should be arranged. The evaluation can help you and your child understand what is causing the bullying, and help you develop a plan to stop the destructive behavior.

If you suspect your child may be the victim of bullying ask him or her to tell you what’s going on. You can help by providing lots of opportunities to talk with you in an open and honest way.

It’s also important to respond in a positive and accepting manner. Let your child know it’s not his or her fault, and that he or she did the right thing by telling you. If your child is aware of someone who is being bullied, encourage him or her to notify someone and get help. Other specific suggestions include the following:

Ask your child what he or she thinks should be done. What’s already been tried? What worked and what didn’t?

Seek help from your child’s teacher or the school guidance counselor. Most bullying occurs on playgrounds, in lunchrooms, and bathrooms, on school buses or in unsupervised halls. Ask the school administrators to find out

about programs other schools and communities have used to help combat bullying, such as peer mediation, conflict resolution, and anger management training, and increased adult supervision.

Don't encourage your child to fight back. Instead, suggest that he or she try walking away to avoid the bully, or that they seek help from a teacher, coach, or other adult.

Help your child practice what to say to the bully so he or she will be prepared the next time.

Help your child practice being assertive. The simple act of insisting that the bully leave him alone may have a surprising effect. Explain to your child that the bully's true goal is to get a response.

Encourage your child to be with friends when traveling back and forth from school, during shopping trips, or on other outings. Bullies are less likely to pick on a child in a group.

If your child becomes withdrawn, depressed or reluctant to go to school, or if you see a decline in school performance, additional consultation or intervention may be required. A child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional can help your child and family and the school develop a strategy to deal with the bullying. Seeking professional assistance earlier can lessen the risk of lasting emotional consequences for your child.

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https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Bullying-080.aspx

PREVENTING TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

Written by Ken Ginsburg / Preventing Risks

Prevent Teen Alcohol, Drug and Substance Use

Parents play a critical role in preventing teens from using cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol. To fill this role we must have the kind of relationship where we address issues head on, hold real discussions, and deal with the realities of substance use. This is a tall order, but nobody is in a better position to fill it than you.

What You Need to Know About Addiction

As long as addiction is seen as something that only happens to people with real problems, adolescents won't know they are at risk. Addiction is a biologically driven behavior. Substances change brain chemistry. It is not a behavior of choice or a sign of moral weakness. Addiction is never planned, rather it happens after repeated exposures to mind altering substances. It can happen to anybody who is exposed to addictive drugs, including alcohol, tobacco cigarettes, or prescription painkillers.

Even when someone is addicted, there is a path for recovery.

When addiction is treated as a health problem that includes both prevention and professional treatment, people can recover. Stigmatizing people suffering from addiction only makes it harder for them to recover.

What You Need to Know About Teen Substance Use

As long as substances are seen as relatively harmless, teens may believe they are just a way to have fun. Substances are particularly harmful to the rapidly developing adolescent brain. People also expose themselves to other dangers when under a mind-altering substance, ranging from car crashes to riskier sexual behaviors. The dangers of tobacco are wide-ranging and without question. To learn more, the Partnership for Drug Free Kids offers accurate, timely information on all substances ranging from cigarettes and alcohol to prescription drug and opiate abuse.

As long as substance use is seen as a rite of passage, teens will think they are destined to include them as part of their journey towards adulthood. Many young people do not regularly use substances, such as alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. It is not a rite of passage. The majority of teens actually choose to remain substance-free and don't see this as normal behavior.

Parents are key influencers. We are without question the most influential people in our tween's and teen's lives. Many of those who believe substance use is most influenced by peer pressure may be mistaken.

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

Foster parenting is hard. You face challenges as you parent children and youth with a trauma history that your friends and family do not understand. Please join us in one of our support groups where you can find mutual support and opportunities to discuss parenting joys, challenges and strategies as you navigate the life of a foster parent.

Faces: Online Foster Parent Support Group Chat on Facebook

- Meets Tuesday nights at 9:00 (CT).
- Contact Robbi at 402-853-1091. You must have a Facebook account.

Parenting Across Color Lines

- Fourth Tuesday of the month — for multi-racial families.
- 6:15pm at Connection Point, Lincoln. Pot Luck Supper prior to meeting.
- RSVP required — Contact Felicia, (402) 476-2273 or Jessica at <mailto:jessica@nfapa.org>

Adoptive Mom Support Group in Lincoln

- Second Friday of the month, for adoptive moms.
- 7:00-9:00 pm
- RSVP required, Felicia, (402) 476-2273

Prevention, Prevention, Prevention

Understanding these key points empowers you to shape your teen's behaviors. You will be even more effective when you understand some of the driving forces that influence whether or not your teen will use substances. Our prevention efforts have to go beyond telling young people what not to do, we must just as clearly show them what to do.

Be a Lighthouse Parent

Parents who use a lighthouse (or balanced) parenting style raise children who do better in school and are emotionally healthier. They also engage in far fewer risky behaviors, including substance use. Parents with the most authority over their teens are those who express their love and warmth, are flexible to meet changing needs, and set and monitor clear rules. Their teens are also most likely to come to them for advice and to seek guidance when they find themselves under pressure or in a tight spot.

Promote Positive Sensation Seeking within Safe Boundaries

Adolescents' brains are wired to seek new experiences. This is good! They are super-learners and their brain is developing at a very rapid pace. Adolescence is when they should be exposed to new opportunities to maximize their growth potential and brain development. The adolescent brain is particularly sensitive to new sensations precisely because it drives learning. Sensation-seeking prepares young people to get the most from this period of development. But it also puts them at risk for substance use.

What can we do? Two things. First, let teens have plenty of opportunities for seeking safe thrills. Try out for a team. A first date. Take part in a play. These positive opportunities to stretch may largely fill their drive to seek new experiences. Second, monitor our children closely and set clear boundaries. These boundaries can't be random or placed on a whim, or teens may interpret them as an attempt to control them. When teens feel controlled they go around our rules. We must help them clearly understand that the boundaries are set to keep them safe and moral. And allow room for stretching and sensation-seeking within those boundaries. If teens' lives are stimulating within safe boundaries, there may be less of a need to go beyond them.

Our prevention efforts have to go beyond telling young people what not to do, we must just as clearly show them what to do.

Guide Towards Positive Stress Management Strategies

Life can be stressful. Stress creates discomfort. Anything we do to lessen our discomfort is called coping. So many of the behaviors that destroy lives are negative coping strategies. They offer fleeting relief but bring more stress to our lives, harm our relationships, and damage our health. Cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs are tops among dangerous coping strategies.

Telling kids what not to do is only a start. We have to teach them ways to manage life's stressors in healthy ways that bring us together, build strong bodies, enable us to express our feelings, build communities, and solve problems.

We offer a comprehensive stress management plan that offers positive, life affirming, strategies. Encourage your tweens and teens to design a plan that works for them by using our interactive tool.

STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR TEENS

It's great you want to help your teens to manage stress. They can build their own plan.

Support Healthy Escapes

Sometimes the best way to manage stress is to disengage from the problem by not even thinking about it. Drugs and alcohol are dangerous ways to disengage. We want to raise our children with healthy escape strategies, so there's no need to reach for harmful ones. An effective escape should keep the mind so busy and focused that there is no room for thoughts that remind us of our stress.

For example, reading utilizes all the senses — we imagine the sounds, sights, and smells, and experience the emotions. Our minds work so hard painting a picture, that there is little room for anything else. Mindfulness allows you to be so attuned to the present that there is little room to dwell on the past or worry about the future. For more strategies, see our piece on Instant Vacations.

Support Positive Peer Influence

Peers hold powerful influence over each other. However, that influence can as easily be positive as negative. We can't choose our teen's friends, but we can influence the likelihood that they will be surrounded by supportive, caring friends who make wise choices. We do this when we support participation in after school activities or community and religious programs. When we know their friends' parents and share common rules so that our teens can stay well within our boundaries and not feel like an outcast. And when we prepare our teens to safely navigate peer culture by:

- Supporting teens to use the word "No" clearly, wisely, and effectively.
- Teaching teens how to make the right choices without losing their friends.
- Showing teens how to get themselves out of risky situations by shifting blame to you. Or by using a "Code Word" to signal you should pick them up or demand they get home.

Build Wise Consumers

Carefully crafted marketing messages are trying to build the next generation of smokers and drinkers by making substances look exciting and attractive. We must help our children understand they are being manipulated. It can actually be fun to make children advertising skeptics. We must help them grasp the dangers of substance use. These

dangers are anything but fun, nor do they make us attractive.

Help adolescents understand that they are being manipulated by people in the name of profit. It activates youth to want to push for justice and fairness. We want our young people saying, "What?! That's not right! They won't get me." The Truth Campaign stands as a model of this kind of effective prevention.

Model, Model, Model

Our actions speak loudly. This doesn't mean you have to be an angel or choose to never have a drink. It does mean that you should model positive coping strategies, seek safe excitement, independent decision-making, and choose healthy temporary escapes. It also means that when you do choose to drink, you are not doing so to "escape" or to manage anger.

In the event you are a smoker or involved with other substances, consider whether now is the time to model the strength it takes to do something about it and get professional help if and when you need it. Click here for links to helpful programs and resources.

If You're Worried

Partnership for Drug Free Kids offers warning signs that your adolescent might be using harmful substances. Here are some thoughts on what to do (or not) if you believe your child is using substances:

- Don't ignore your instincts or wait to intervene. Time will not make it better.
- Don't call something normal that's not. This is not a phase all teens have to go through.
- Don't enable your teen's alcohol, cigarette, or drug use. Know what they are doing with their money and free time.
- Do be unwavering in your support. Make it clear you remain totally by their side. Whether they show it or not, our teens want to make us proud.
- Do remember who your children really are. They are the very same people you have always loved. You are needed now more than ever.
- Do engage professional guidance. Highly effective parents comfortably turn to professional support.
- Prevention isn't just about acting before your child even considers trying a harmful substance. It is also about taking quick action before circumstances worsen.

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https://parentandteen.com/preventing-substance-use/?utm_source=fb_4_21_25&utm_medium=o_p&utm_campaign=facebook_AM&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR5irtY3dNORzxTlKOAgnUdBUZv-YlxUi9TzCcHHJ0JlFtBvaK9XrZwjs1pg_aem_vl6kFBd-EB0fw6fsIG2TGg

SUICIDE PREVENTION: 12 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO

As children grow and become more independent, it can be more challenging for parents to know what they are thinking and feeling. When do the normal ups and downs of adolescence become something to worry about?

Parents and family members can help teens cope when life feels too difficult to bear. (Parents, share one teen's story, "How I turned my struggles into a way to help others" with your child, below.)

Learn about factors that can increase your child's risk for suicide and explore these 12 suggestions below. These steps can help you feel better prepared to offer the caring, non-judgmental support your child needs.

1. If you see signs that your child's mental health is under threat, tune in.

Maybe your child is just having a bad day. When signs of mental health troubles last for weeks, though, don't assume it's just a passing mood.

Studies show that 9 of 10 teens who died by suicide were struggling with mental health conditions such as depression. But keep in mind:

Teens who haven't been diagnosed with any mental health condition may still be at risk. In part, this is because it can be hard to pinpoint mental health issues at early ages.

Occasionally teens who attempt suicide do not have underlying mental health issues. But they may give signs that they're considering ending their own lives.

Your goal should be to remain calm, alert and ready to speak with your teen. Don't wait for them to come to you. You might start by saying, "You seem sad. I'm open to talking about this, because I love you and I care what happens to you."

Here are more tips for opening mental health conversations with your child.

2. Listen—even when your child is not talking.

Don't be surprised if your teen turns away when you first raise the subject of mental health or suicide. Keep in mind that, even if your child is silent at first, actions may speak even more loudly than words.

Watch for major changes in your child's sleep patterns, appetite and social activities. Self-isolation, especially for kids who usually enjoy hanging out with friends or participating in activities, can signal serious difficulties.

If your child is struggling more than usual with schoolwork, chores and other responsibilities, these are additional signs you shouldn't ignore.

3. Realize that your child might be facing suicide risks you haven't considered yet.

Many parents wonder: Could my child really be at risk for suicide? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. Young people of all races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, income levels and community backgrounds die by suicide

every year.

In fact, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people 10 to 24 years old.

Here are some suicide risk factors to be aware of:

Loss of a loved one to death, divorce, deployment, deportation or incarceration

Bullying (in person or online)

Discrimination, rejection or hostility due to gender identity or sexual orientation

Racism, discrimination and related inequities and stressors

Stigma (the belief that it's wrong or shameful to talk about mental health or suicide)

Witnessing or suffering violence or domestic abuse

Financial instability that causes worry and insecurity

Suicide in their school or friend group

Major life-changing events, such as a breakup with a dating partner, a change in social connections, academic disappointment or a major health issue

Self-harming behavior

4. Do not dismiss what you're seeing as "teenage drama."

Never assume your child is exaggerating or playing games if they say or write:

"I want to die."

"I don't care anymore."

"Nothing matters."

"I wonder how many people would come to my funeral?"

"Sometimes I wish I could just go to sleep and never wake up."

"Everyone would be better off without me."

"You won't have to worry about me much longer."

Many adolescents who attempt suicide will tell their parents ahead of time (though others do not). These words indicate an urgent need for help.

Don't risk being wrong about this. Take every statement about suicide seriously.

5. Respond with empathy and understanding.

When your child talks or writes about suicide, you may feel shocked, hurt or angry. You may even want to deny what you're seeing or argue with your child. These feelings are natural and valid. But it's essential to focus on your child's needs first and foremost.

Your goal is to create a safe space where your teen can trust you to listen and express concern, but without judgment or blame.

Instead of reacting this way:

"That's a ridiculous thing to say."

"You have a great life – why would you end it?"

"You don't mean that."

"I can't believe what I'm hearing!"

Manage your own feelings so you can respond with empathy:

"I'm sorry you are feeling this way—can you share a bit more?"

"It sounds like you're in tremendous pain and you can't see

a way out."

"Maybe you're wondering how life got this complicated and difficult."

"Right now, you're not sure of the answers to the problems you're facing."

"You must really, really be hurting inside to consider ending your life."

6. Get help right away.

Risk for suicidal behavior is complex and not straightforward. Certainly, if you are concerned about depression, self-harm or vague references to suicide thoughts, seek care from your primary care provider as soon as possible. You can consider reaching out to a school therapist, local mental health provider or even a national suicide hotline for guidance.

If you have any concern that your teen is at more immediate risk for attempting suicide, take them to the emergency department of your local hospital or call 911. Fast action is crucial when things have reached a crisis point.

Health care providers can help you and your teen create a safety plan that covers:

Warning signs or triggers your teen feels will lead to suicidal thoughts

Possible steps to help them cope when they feel triggered

Sources of support: family, friends, teachers, mentors and others

Emergency contacts and steps to take if things get worse

7. Remove or secure guns you have at home. Do the same with other lethal means.

Firearms

Half of youth suicides occur with firearms—and suicide attempts with firearms are almost always fatal. Teens and adolescents almost always use a gun found in their house.

By far, the safest option is to remove all guns and ammunition from your home while your teen is struggling with thoughts of suicide. Many families turn guns over to relatives (as long as your child does not go to that relative's house), other trusted individuals, law enforcement or gun shops to help safeguard their teen during a vulnerable time.

Safe home storage is the second-best option. Locking and unloading all guns, with ammunition stored and locked in a separate space, does reduce the risk of tragedy. But it only helps if your teen doesn't know the combination to the lock or where the key is hidden. Disassembling guns and storing the components separately and locked is another option.

Medications & other risks

Of course, guns are not the only means of suicide your child might seek out. Prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs can pose hazards during a suicidal crisis.

Keep medications locked away and, whenever possible, reduce the volume of medications on hand. Also consider buying over-the-counter medications in blister packs instead of bottles. This can help slow down access to pills.

Hanging/suffocation is another leading way adolescents die

by suicide. Though it is challenging to completely eliminate this possibility, secure any ropes, belts, cords or plastic bags so teens do not have access.

Other potentially lethal tools and substances you should consider locking away include:

- Alcohol
- Illicit drugs
- Household cleaners and other poisonous products
- Canned dusting products
- Inhalants
- Antifreeze
- Knives, razors, or other weapons

The work of removing or locking up these objects and substances may seem daunting. But remember that your child's safety is at stake.

Suicide attempts are often impulsive, and a moment of crisis can escalate very quickly. Making sure your teen cannot lay hands on lethal means at the wrong time is critical.

8. As your child enters treatment, focus on creating hope.

Your child's care team will likely recommend a combination of steps to reduce mental health symptoms and thoughts of suicide. Medications, talk therapy and stress-reducing techniques such as yoga, meditation or journaling may be part of the plan.

Provide realistic reassurance for your child along the way. Remind them (and yourself) that difficult times don't last forever. People do feel better when they receive effective treatment and support.

If your child expresses feelings of stigma or shame, you can remind them that 1 in 5 people have mental health symptoms at some point in their lives. Mental health is part of total health—and seeking help is a sign of self-respect and maturity.

9. Encourage them to see family and friends, and keep an eye on social media.

Your child may feel reluctant to spend time with other people. However, you can explain that social support, when they are ready, may help them feel better.

Although more quiet time might be needed at first, gentle encouragement to hang out with family, friends and neighbors will be helpful. Avoid power struggles around specific events or invitations, since your goal is to respect your child's needs and minimize stress.

Social media may be the primary way some adolescents engage with their friends. It can be a point of connection and support, but at the same time, social media can be a source of bullying and triggers. Encourage an open dialogue around social media use and ask how your adolescent feels after using social media. Consider making a Family Media Plan.

10. Encourage sleep and exercise.

Sleep changes can be warning signs before suicidal thoughts. In addition, sleep is important for baseline mental health. Encourage healthy sleep habits.

Physical activity eases mental health symptoms and supports

your child's wellness plan. Whether it's getting outside to take a daily walk, a gym workout, an online exercise class or something else, exercise will:

Elevate your teen's mood by stimulating the production of endorphins (natural substances in the brain and body that help balance out stress and manage pain).

Support higher levels of serotonin, another brain-body substance that leads to positive moods and restful sleep.

Offer to go with them on a walk, a bike ride, or to the gym. Experts recommend 60 minutes of physical activity per day for adolescents. Easing back into any form of exercise is fine. What matters most is that your teen enjoys this activity and feels motivated to do it regularly.

11. Encourage balance, moderation and self-care.

Teens in crisis need to go easy on themselves. This means adopting a realistic pace and avoiding experiences that could prove overwhelming.

Reassure your teen that self-care is never a sign of weakness. Everything we do in life is affected by our health. So, giving ourselves time to heal is essential. Big tasks can be divided into smaller, more manageable ones, and gradually, as your child's confidence and strength grow, they'll feel ready to take on more.

Building resilience & healthy coping skills

Parents and caregivers have powerful tools that can help equip children and teens with skills that help them thrive during difficult times. Go here to learn about 4 key building blocks of healthy mental and emotional development and ways to support them.

12. Remind each other that this will take time.

You and your child will benefit from knowing that progress will come at its own pace. Setbacks may happen—they're part of the healing process, too.

Encourage your child to be patient and self-forgiving. They've been through a lot, but with the right care and support, you will both see improvement.

Remember

If your child is considering suicide, call or text 988 or chat on 988lifeline.org right away. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones.

Ask your teen's care team for other resources you should know about. The National Alliance on Mental Illness and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention have great information.

Parents of LGBTQ2S+ children can visit the Trevor Project website for focused resources. Parents and teens facing racial stress can benefit from these strategies and tools offered by the American Psychological Association.

You can also visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention for information about ways to prevent suicide in your community or school.

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<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/suicide-prevention-things-parents-can-do.aspx>

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- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
**NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521.**

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- ☐ **Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), \$25
- ☐ **Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- ☐ **Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- ☐ **Organization Membership**
(organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- ☐ **Friends of NFAPA**, \$5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- ☐ Gold Donation, \$1,000
- ☐ Silver Donation, \$750
- ☐ Platinum Donation, \$500
- ☐ Bronze Donation, \$250
- ☐ Other, \$ _____