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TIPS to help your teen succeed in high school



Starting high school is a big milestone. You and your teen may be feeling both excited about all the new opportunities and nervous about how to adjust to the high school environment.

As a parent, you have an important role in helping your teen build the confidence and skills needed for a successful transition to high school. Here are five tips to help you guide students from grade eight to grade nine and help them thrive throughout the high school years.

1 Stay involved with your teen.

Keep your relationship positive and strong. Being involved with teens means less direct supervision and more communication about what is happening in their life.

- Have fun together; set aside family time.
- Involve them in decisions about chores, ground rules and other choices that affect them; be open to negotiation.
- Agree upon consequences for poor decisions.
- Take an interest in what your teen likes to talk about. Help them find their passion!
- Stay connected to your teen's school.
- When your teen goes out, ask where they are going, with whom, and when and how they will get home.

2 Help your teen connect with new people, friends and experiences.

Teens that are connected to family, friends, school and community are more likely to get better grades, make healthy choices and be resilient.

- Introduce your teen to new people, programs and activities.
- Suggest they get involved in school activities such as clubs, music, arts or sports teams.
- Help them look for volunteer opportunities that are meaningful to them.
- Encourage supportive friendships by welcoming their friends into your home.
- Encourage your teen to know and help your neighbours.

3 Help them balance school and homework with extracurricular activities, jobs and personal time.

Learning to balance commitments, interests and downtime is a life skill. Teens often need help with scheduling, setting priorities and learning to manage their time.

- Establish healthy routines: teens need at least seven to nine hours of sleep each night, regular healthy meals and snacks and 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Help them set a time and space for homework.
- Encourage teens to be involved in an activity they enjoy, even if homework is heavy.
- Set guidelines around screen time (TV, video games, texting and online activities).
- Limit part-time work and volunteering to 15 hours a week.
- Ensure they build time for themselves and spending time with their friends into their schedules.

4 Help your teen feel comfortable in their new school.

Parents show support through love, acceptance, responsiveness and communication. Teens that feel supported develop empathy, confidence and problem-solving skills.

- Reassure your teen that it's normal to feel nervous when starting high school.
- Talk about the potential challenges of starting high school and brainstorm solutions together.
- Listen attentively and respectfully to their concerns; acknowledge their feelings.
- Help them learn ways to cope with their changing emotions.
- Stay alert to signs that your teen may be struggling; encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult about any problems.
- Encourage them to ask for help when needed and ensure they know where to get it.

5 Be a positive role model.

Parents who make healthy life choices set a positive example for their teens. Identifying clear roles helps your teen understand what is expected of them.

- Be present and take the time to connect face-to-face; put aside any technology/ devices when speaking to each other.
- Make commitments and keep them; encourage your teen to do the same.
- Be accepting of others' differences.
- Recognize and praise your teen's efforts, not only their achievements.
- Demonstrate healthy choices e.g. eat healthy, be active, manage stress.

Stay connected with your teen to help them manage stress.

Starting high school can be stressful for teens. In addition to worrying about getting lost and fitting in at their new school, they may also be concerned about an increased workload and social issues such as peer pressure. Stress is normal and can motivate teens to work hard and succeed. However, when excess stress is not managed, it can lead to anxiety and risk-taking behaviours like using alcohol or drugs.

Staying connected and involved with your teen will help guide them toward positive attitudes and behaviours. It will also help your teen build strong relationships and valuable life skills. Enjoy the journey!

