



Counselor's Corner

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Supporting the Emotional Development of Your Teen



Parents play an important role in supporting teens as they develop emotionally. Here are some tips for how parents can make this time of emotional growth a positive experience from Dr. Elizabeth Fedrick, PhD, LPC and Michael Klinkner, MSW, LCSW of Evolve Counseling and Behavioral Services.

Validate your teen's feelings

- Help them label the emotion if they can't
- Use statements like: "That sounds like a lot." "That would be hard."
- Be careful to not give them the idea that they need to "just get over it."

Investigate by asking the right questions and waiting for answers

- Help your child focus on how they see the situation and when it got started
- Ask "What was the worst part for you?" "Does this kind of thing happen a lot?" and "Is there any other way of looking at that situation, maybe from someone else's point of view?"

Help teens feel in control

- Help them explore their options: "What part can you solve?"
- Get and use their inputs and opinions to solve the issue
- Break the problem down into smaller parts if needed
- Provide reassurance and cheerleading

Stay calm to help teen regulate their emotions

- Yelling, shaming, and chaos increases amygdala activity and decreases a child's ability to effectively regulate.
- Show support by being with them or near them during a stressful situation.
- Remember, what a teen sees, experiences, and learns is acceptable, will dictate future behaviors.

Plan intentional and regular one-on-one time with your teen

- Get their input on activity/restaurant/etc.
- Prepare conversation starters
- Ask open-ended questions and ask about emotions/experiences
- Share about your emotions/experiences
- Show interest (put your phone down)

Catch your teen making positive choices

- Praise 3x more than you redirect
- Label the specific positive behaviors that you are trying to increase
- Try to “let things go” when appropriate
- Use reward-based systems

Avoid power struggles

- Figure out what is triggering you in that moment. What is it about your teen’s behavior is making you upset?
- A power struggle is sending the message that you are equals (diminishes authority)
- Give your teen choices and allow freedom when appropriate (is the request because it is convenient/your personal opinion vs. a safety or well-being expectation)
- Know when to walk away (pick your battles)
- Consistency is key (people will do what they know they can get away with)

Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes

- The willingness to apologize to your teen and take ownership of your mistakes will go a long way and teaches your teen how to do the same.
- Parents are human too
- Acknowledge mistakes (people do not “deserve” to be yelled at)
- Do better next time- It is not about the rupture, it is about the repair

Be Present

- The most important thing you can do to foster your teen’s social/emotional intelligence is to be present and aware
- Be aware of teen’s love language ([Five Love Languages Quiz](#))
- Be consistent (so your teen knows what to expect)



**September is
National Suicide
Prevention Month**

For more information,
visit:

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

**Southwest Behavioral & Health
Services**

<https://www.sbhservices.org/>

Outpatient counseling services for students are available through our school-based provider, Southwest Behavioral Health. For information and referrals, please contact Mrs. Cavallo