

Parenting a Difficult Teen

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Raising a teen isn't easy. Raising a troubled teen is even more difficult. Whether your teen has substance use problems, behavioral issues, or mental health problems, intervention is necessary. There are several things you can do to help guide your teen onto the right path before she becomes an adult. Here are six parenting tips for raising a troubled teen.

Connect With Your Teen: In parenting a troubled teen, it's normal to be tempted to turn away from your teen as problems become more serious. But keeping a strong connection with your teen is important. Work on effective communication and strive to maintain the best relationship possible.

Your relationship with a troubled teen won't be perfect. But spending quality time together and showing your teen you care can go a long way toward helping your teen get better.

How to Talk to Your Teen: Try Reframing Your Teen's Situation

An approach often used by therapists is to view a situation or behavior differently from what you have been doing, a technique known as reframing. By shifting perspective, reframing offers insight into what is triggering your teens' behavior often comes into focus.¹

Sometimes parents and teens can get unstuck simply by looking at a situation with new eyes, which is usually followed by acting or thinking about things differently. And here's the really good news—when a

parent responds in different ways there is no choice for the teen but to act differently too.

Recognize When Your Teen Is in Trouble: Knowing when your teen is in trouble is an essential key to unlocking the factors contributing to the disturbing changes in your teen. Professionals who work with teens describe troubling teen behavior as acting out, meaning this behavior is the outward expression of underlying issues that need attention.

Troubled behavior in teens takes many forms. Often, underlying mental health issues such as depression, defiance, and risky behavior.

Sometimes, teens turn to drugs or alcohol in an attempt to numb their pain.

Underneath your teen's angry or oppositional behavior is likely a lot of pain. Recognizing this can help you empathize with your teen's needs.

Seek Professional Help: Most troubled teens benefit from some type of professional help in identifying the underlying reasons for their problems and assistance in dealing with them. Getting help for a troubled teen when they first start having difficulties is usually far more successful than waiting until problems get worse.

For some parents, this can be a difficult step to take. Some fear that reaching out for help is a sign of weakness, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Keep in mind that the police don't provide treatment. Threatening to call the cops if your teen doesn't straighten out won't inspire your teen to behave better. Seek help from a mental health professional.

Advantages of seeking professional help for a troubled teen include experienced help in figuring out the reasons your teen is acting out, expertise in identifying what clinical interventions are most likely to be effective, and support in helping your teen, yourself and your family get through this difficult time.

When to Take Action: Parents of troubled teens are often filled with fear. Many parents wonder if they will know what to do if the situation spirals out of control, putting the teen, or others in danger.

Crisis situations are not uncommon in dealing with a teen who is emotionally unstable or unable to cope well with stressful situations. It's important to take action if your teen is in crisis. Taking steps to know in advance how to deal with these potentially dangerous makes it easier to respond effectively if you ever need to do so.

Take Care of Yourself: If you're stressed out and overwhelmed, you won't be much help to your teen. It's important to make sure you take steps to gain support and take care of yourself.

The healthier you are, the better equipped you'll be to deal with your troubled teen. Take time for yourself and devote some of your energy into ensuring you're staying emotionally and physically healthy.