

## Ten Ways to Help Your Child Become Self-Reliant

All parents want to aid and protect their children. The best thing we can do for kids, though, is teach them how to help themselves. Read on for ways to help your child develop into a successful adult.

### 1. Encourage Public Speaking

Taking a speech class or joining the debate team can serve a number of purposes for teens. Developing the ability to stand up in front of a group and make themselves heard is key to boosting kids' self-esteem as well as their communication skills. Learning the appropriate way to speak to a variety of audiences is also important, as high school students need to know how to address peers, teachers, and employers.

### 2. Practice Negotiation

High school students are looking for more freedom and independence. Rather than getting all the house rules, have a family planning session for rule setting. By involving kids in determining regulations, parents teach them the invaluable skills of fair compromise and negotiation with authority figures.

### 3. Model Time Management and Organizational Skills

Children learn from what they see. If parents are late and disorganized, their kids generally follow suit. Post a calendar that highlights individual and group appointments and plans. Use a weekly planner, and make to-do lists. In short, model being organized for your child.

### 4. Teach Self-Sufficiency

The more kids do for themselves, the more confident they'll be when it comes to handling themselves in new situations. Show teens how to do laundry. Make them responsible for a family meal each week. Ultimately, this will make them more independent.

### 5. Encourage Independence at School

Teens need to take responsibility for their academic careers. They should be keeping track of assignments and due dates, communicating independently with counselors and teachers, and participating in the extracurricular activities of their choice. Clearly, parental advice is appropriate at times. However, teens appreciate room to succeed, or to make mistakes, on their own.

### 6. Listen With an Open Mind

Of course, kids sometimes disagree with their parents. Those who fear disapproval or punishment often hide the truth or avoid discussing important topics. Teens who are confident that they can talk to their parents without a major blow-up are more likely to be forthcoming. In the end, young people who feel good about expressing themselves at home will be more prepared to express themselves in difficult situations.

### 7. Provide Structure

Although they may bemoan the regulations of life, teens actually function better when rules are in place. Authoritative parents who require adherence to an agreed-upon set of rules, but who also encourage communication and independence, produce happy and successful kids.

### 8. Remember That Every Story Has Two Sides

When our kids come home with tales of woe, we need to keep in mind that we are hearing only one perspective. Before forming an opinion, get all the facts. Did the teacher really give only one day's notice for a 10-page essay? Did the coach actually keep your child out of the game for no reason? When teens are frustrated or hurting, they may embellish the truth. Parents who know the facts can effectively help their children learn to respond to disappointing or difficult life scenarios.

### **9. Teach Self-Respect**

When people feel good about themselves, they are able to stand up for themselves, and teenagers are no exception. Focus on helping your child develop good decision-making skills and solid self-esteem. Praise a job well done, and emphasize positive character traits. A confident child will not be afraid to speak up.

### **10. Teach Logical Conflict Resolution**

High school students deal with many problems in the social and academic arenas. At a time in life when emotions run high, teens need some help figuring out how to resolve everyday dilemmas. Parents are a great resource for finding alternatives in problematic situations. Encourage and model thinking calmly and critically, so your kids learn to pick the solution that makes the most sense.

Part of being a good parent is knowing when to step in and when to give kids some space. Remember that successful people advocate for themselves. So step back when the time is right, and let your child step up.