

Setting Boundaries for Good Choices

Parenting an adolescent or teenager requires a delicate balance between giving them enough guidance and boundaries to ensure they make healthy choices while giving them the freedom to learn to have-a-go on their own. As with all learning, some behavioural, emotional and social “mistakes” will be inevitable and sometimes you may need to step in and help them to ensure their safety and wellbeing. This needs to be done in a way that will enable them to learn and yet still feel confident to try things on their own.

Some teenagers will be ready for more autonomy in their decisions and others will need a bit more support and guidance. As their father you will have a sense of how ready and capable they are of managing their own decisions and how much you will need to guide them and support them to take on this responsibility. Make sure your assessment of your adolescent is not guided by your own fear or need to be in control.

It is important that they know that even though you are supporting their efforts to ‘take the reins’ themselves, you are there to back them up if needed. While some boundaries are not negotiable, others can be discussed with your adolescent. This allows them to build confidence in their ability to make their own decisions and shows that you trust them. Most importantly they need to know that you will be there for them, if they need you and will love them unconditionally even when they make mistakes or poor choices.



For more information: thefatheringproject.org



Top Tips for Dads

- **Be clear and consistent with expectations.** Teenagers gain strength and self-respect from parents who are clear and consistent in their expectations and willing to discuss reasons for their decision.
- **Give love and support.** Teenagers still need and usually react positively to parental love, support and guidance.
- **Allow competent teenagers to take responsibility when you see them handling situations well.** Praise them and show them they have earned your trust that they can handle things responsibly.
- **Praise their efforts.** When your teenager displays good self-management skills let them know you have noticed and are proud of them. Let them know that when they show responsible behaviour and choices, they are showing they can be trusted to make more of their own decisions.
- **Decisions and agreements can now be made together.** Try to discuss issues to reach an outcome that you and your teenager can both accept. "Okay, you can go to the party, but you need to be home at a reasonable time. What time do you think we should agree to?"
- **Step in if you need to.** You can show respect for your teenager's feelings and need for independence, but you should reserve the right to limit some of their actions if you feel they may be at risk.



Wellbeing Check



Think about your own boundaries between work and home. Where possible try to leave your work out of family time so you can be present and engaged when you are at home or with your children. If your job is demanding and it is difficult to make boundaries between home and work, think about the wellbeing costs for you and your children. Schedule family time and work time and try to stick to your boundaries.

For more information: thefatheringproject.org