



Stop Doing so Much for your Teen

In a push back against “helicopter parenting,” [many articles recommend](#) that you stop doing so much for your teen. These articles are right about many of these life-skill type tasks, but as parents we need to find a happy medium between hands off and helicopter.

Why be more hands off?

Many teens leave high school without being able to take care of themselves. One of our main jobs as parents is to raise future adults. As we are creating and utilizing various parenting strategies, we need to be mindful of the goal – raising adults.

Teaching children how to accomplish tasks they need to be able to do as adults (laundry, dusting, packing a lunch, cooking, etc.) helps them build confidence. When teaching a child (or teen) how to accomplish a task, try to follow the “I do, We do, You do” model.

1. Demonstrate the behavior while explaining what you are doing.
2. Allow your child to do the task with you.
3. Watch your child try to do the behavior. Give them any needed assistance, and go over how they did afterwards.

Focus on the positives (but correct any major mistakes) from each attempt, and remember that mastery may not happen until they have tried many times. It may be helpful to have a posted set of guidelines for the task. For example, you could make a chart that shows how to wash the

laundry (amount of soap, temperature, spin speed, and cycle for various types of loads), what to pack for lunch (examples of different vegetables, fruits, sandwiches, etc.), or tips to use when dusting (start up high, which surfaces are wet or dry dusted, etc.).

Jobs that only impact or affect your teen are great ones to teach and then hand off. These include: packing lunch and making their own breakfast, doing their own laundry, remembering their homework (and other needed items). Learning that they have to buy if they don't pack a lunch, or that their uniform isn't clean because they didn't bother to wash it will help them remember to do better the next time.

When Should You Still Step In?

Parents need to step in on items that impact a child's health and safety.

YOUR TEEN IS USING ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS

Despite the pervasive idea that "all teens" are using, research shows that a minority of teens use substances and even fewer use regularly or heavily. If your teen is using alcohol, cannabis, vaping, or using other substances, it's time to step in and get help. It's easy to get an assessment scheduled for our [TRIP program](#) to see if that type of help would be appropriate.

YOUR TEEN IS SHOWING SIGNS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Teens feeling stress is nothing new, but if your teen is showing signs of depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns, they will benefit from a caregiver helping connect them to professional help. Our clinicians can see clients for one-on-one sessions, family therapy, or our [Clarity Intensive](#) IOP program.

TAKING MEDICATIONS OR FOLLOWING MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Teens are not yet ready to independently take their own medications or follow through on recommendations, like physical therapy. Parents need to ensure that medications are taken as directed or prescribed. It is ok to watch your child take the medicine or to count the pills to make sure they are being taken properly.

RIDING IN OR DRIVING A CAR

Set up rules for driving and riding in cars with teen drivers. You may not trust all of the teens you know to drive your child. It will annoy him or her, but it's a safety issue. Likewise, your child may not be mature enough to drive friends or to drive to or from various events. It's ok to set up guidelines about driving.

PHONE USE

Do you pay for your child's phone or service? That makes it your phone. Even if your child is paying for it, while they are living in your home, you still have the right and the responsibility to regularly check up on their online activity. Yes, it will make you unpopular. The health and safety concerns outweigh your child's privacy. Set limits on when and how long a teen can use a phone. Don't allow your teen to charge the phone in their bedroom.

THERE IS A PROBLEM AT SCHOOL

Maybe your child is having trouble in a class or feels like a teacher is treating them unfairly. Let your child try to solve these types of problems first. Guide your children through the conversations they need to have with the teacher. Role play with them. Read over emails they are planning to send.

Once the teen has tried what they know how to do, it's ok to step in if the problem isn't getting better. Use it as a learning opportunity. Model the behavior you would like to see from your child, and try to get them involved in solving the problem, when they can't solve it alone.

SHOW UP FOR YOUR CHILD

Teaching your child independence doesn't mean leaving them alone. It is very important to continue to show up when your child has activities or events. Make sure you attend open house or curriculum nights at school. Participate in fund raisers for their school or activity groups. Drive carpool – a great way to overhear information. Cheer on your child's sports teams. Watch your child perform in plays and concerts. Volunteer for your school or religious organization. Many groups need parent help in planning, fundraising or setup. Schools can often use tutors, hall monitors, or lunchroom assistants. These actions show your child that you care about them.

Stop doing so much for your teen?

Parents need to be thoughtful about the ways they prepare teens for adulthood. Children are developmentally ready to take on various tasks at different ages. In general, parents have been erring on the side of doing for their children, rather than allowing them to try and fail. Of course, some children also have varying (dis)abilities which may make different tasks appropriate to teach them.

Think of what a week in the life of an adult looks like. What mundane tasks do you need to accomplish? Make sure your teen knows how to do them. Give them ample time to practice the skills before you aren't around on a day-to-day basis to help them anymore.