



# PREVENTION TALK

## KEEPING TEENS INVOLVED IN THE FAMILY

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JULIE HOGAN, PH.D. DIRECTOR

By Diane Glass, Prevention Application Management Coordinator  
Edited by Kris Gabrielsen, Associate Director

As children become adolescents, they naturally want more control over their lives and want to be more independent. As teens reach for their independence, parents often struggle to hold onto the bonds or connections they have built in the family. One way to maintain the family bonds and allow for independence is to involve the teen more in the roles and responsibilities of the family.<sup>1</sup>

This issue of Prevention TALK explores creative ways to keep teens involved in their families, which can strengthen the family bonds. Strong families with loving, positive parent-child relationships protect children from drug use.<sup>2</sup> Expanding the roles and responsibilities of adolescents in the family increases and strengthens positive family interaction.<sup>3</sup> By expanding the roles within the family parents have the opportunity to accomplish the following:

- Divide household tasks
- Teach the life skills necessary for youth to become successful adults
- Build self-esteem
- Create and build positive bonds within the family
- Address teen boredom

### REMEMBER

*Developing a strong family bond is one way to protect the health, happiness, and success of your teen(s).<sup>3</sup>*

The more creative parents can be in involving their teen(s) in the family, the more excited the teen(s) will be to contribute and the more opportunities he/she will have to learn new skills.<sup>4</sup> To begin this dialogue in your family, make a list of all the jobs in your household and who does each one. One of the hardest things for parents to do when expanding the roles in the family is to let go of a job and teach the child how to do it. Start by picking one new task

that interests your teen(s) and that you can give up. Teach them the skills to be successful. Be patient while they learn and recognize their efforts. Remember, you are giving them the opportunity to learn a life skill.

Here are a few creative ways to involve your teen(s):

- Balance the checkbook
- Plan a family outing
- Plan, shop for, and create a family meal
- Schedule health care appointments
- Sort and wash the laundry
- Change the oil in the car

### ACTION STEPS:

- Make a list of household tasks with your teen(s)
- Ask your teen which task he or she would like to learn
- Teach the skills to accomplish the new task
- Recognize your teen's efforts
- Rotate tasks to alleviate boredom

### TO THINK ABOUT:

- The breakdown of the family and poor family relationships increase the risk of teen alcohol and other drug use.<sup>3</sup>
- Parents can help teens develop dreams, goals and purpose in life.<sup>3</sup>
- Teaching a new skill to your teen(s) creates a window of opportunity to strengthen family bonds.

For more information call:

### SOURCES CITED:

- <sup>1</sup>Hawkins, J.D., & Catalano, R. (2002). Involving everyone – how to strengthen family bonds. In Channing Bete (Ed.), *Guiding good choices program: Family guide* (ch. 5, p. 3). South Deerfield, MA: Channing Bete Company Inc.
- <sup>2</sup>Ashery, R.S., Robertson, E., Kumpfer, K.L. (Eds.). (1998). Drug abuse prevention through family interventions. *NIDA Research Monograph*, 177.
- <sup>3</sup>Kumpfer, K.L., & Alvarado, R. (1998, November). Effective family strengthening interventions. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, (pp. 2-3,10). Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- <sup>4</sup>The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. (2003). *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VIII: Teens and Parents*. New York, NY: Author.