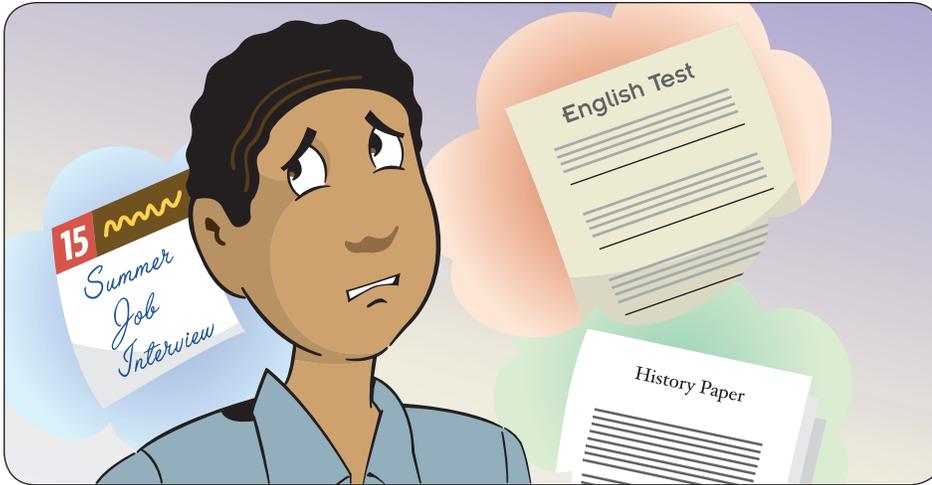


High School Parents[®]

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Educational Service Unit #8

still make the difference!



The end of the school year can be a stressful time for teens

Your teen has an English test tomorrow. His history paper is due next week. The math teacher just assigned a huge group project. And your teen has a summer job interview this weekend. No wonder he's stressed!

The end of a school year is often a time when students feel overwhelmed. And, since stressed teens are rarely at their best, that can lead them to perform below their capabilities.

The good news is that there are ways you can help your teen deal with any stress that comes this time of the year. You can:

- **Listen to him.** Sometimes, just giving your teen a chance to let off steam can be helpful. Don't try to "fix" his problems. Just let him talk and *really* listen to him.
- **Encourage him to find solutions.** Ask questions to help him figure out ways to work through the problem. Has he created a study schedule? Is it possible to reschedule his interview? He's more likely to stick with a solution if he's the one who developed it.
- **Teach him some stress relievers.** Taking a few deep breaths before an exam or a job interview can make him feel more in control. A brief walk outside can help him regain his focus. Eating a healthy snack will give him energy to keep going. But he should avoid high-caffeine energy drinks. They will only make him feel more agitated.
- **Make sure he gets plenty of sleep.** Your teen needs sleep in order to be at his best. A lack of it only heightens the effects of stress.

It's time to talk to your teen about cheating



Studies consistently show that the majority of high school students cheat—probably because most teens don't view cheating as a serious offense.

Teens are under a lot of pressure to do well, and many see cheating as a way to lessen some of that pressure. As a result, anything from copying someone's homework to plagiarizing a paper has become commonplace behavior.

- To discourage cheating:
- **Talk to your teen.** Explain that even though it may seem like everybody does it, cheating is wrong.
 - **Share your expectations.** Let your teen know that you'd rather she do her best and earn a low grade than to score higher by cheating.
 - **Discuss the real-world uses of what your teen is learning.** If she realizes that she may use geometry in the future, she may be more interested in learning it than cheating.

Source: R. Pérez-Peña, "Studies Find More Students Cheating, With High Achievers No Exception," *The New York Times*, nyswc.com/high_cheat.

Five ways to help teens develop self-discipline and responsibility



Discipline and responsibility are essential ingredients for academic success.

And there are many ways parents can help teens become more self-disciplined and responsible.

Have your teen:

1. **Use a calendar** to manage his time. Seeing his test and project dates alongside those of his other activities will help him see which evenings he has time to relax—and which nights he'll have to buckle down and study.
2. **Schedule his own appointments.** This will prepare him to be responsible for managing his time in the future.
3. **Set a budget** and stick to it. He may have some spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. A budget will help him pay attention to his spending—and

see that adding to his savings can be more rewarding than buying another shirt.

4. **Plan a family activity.** Let your teen take charge and organize a picnic at a nearby park, a trip to a local museum or perhaps a visit to see a relative.
5. **Read the newspaper.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with will help him see that his responsibilities (like washing the car and taking out the trash) aren't the inconveniences he previously thought they were.

“You must begin to think of yourself as becoming the person you want to be.”

—David Viscott

Help your teen divide and conquer end-of-year projects



Before the school year officially ends, your teen may be faced with large, end-of-year projects.

These projects can seem daunting—especially when they're all that stand between your teen and summer!

To help your teen:

- **Look at the calendar.** Mark the project's due date on the calendar. Then have her work backwards, crossing out any days where she wouldn't be able to work on the project. How much time is left for her to complete it?
- **Don't overreact**—no matter how much, or how little, time your teen

has left to work on the project. Help her break the project down into smaller chunks. Encourage her to create deadlines for each part.

- **Provide support.** Of course you shouldn't do your teen's project for her. But you can drive her to the store to get supplies, proofread her paper or listen to her presentation.
- **Provide motivation.** You'll be surprised at how helpful a simple “How's the project going?” or “I know you'll do a great job!” can be. Place a self-stick note on your teen's mirror that says “Almost there!”

Are you helping your teen learn from mistakes?



Your teen is bound to make mistakes—everyone does. What's important is what she does *after* she discovers

she's made a mistake. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you're helping your teen learn from her mistakes:

- ___ 1. **Do you try** not to react emotionally when your teen makes a mistake?
- ___ 2. **Do you ask** your teen what lessons she can learn from her mistake?
- ___ 3. **Do you admit it** when you make a mistake and talk about what you're going to do to fix it?
- ___ 4. **Do you talk** to your teen about some of the important lessons you've learned from the mistakes you've made?
- ___ 5. **Do you tell** your teen to be kind to herself? Perfectionists have a tendency to overreact to mistakes.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're helping your teen turn mistakes into learning opportunities. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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A good night's sleep is critical to your teen's school success!



Your teen may think he's able to pay attention in school without getting a proper night's sleep, but that's far from the case! A lack of sleep will reduce his ability to focus on his schoolwork and learn in class.

Share these research-based facts about sleep with your teen:

- **Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep** each night to function well the next day. Only 15 percent of teens report getting 8.5 hours of sleep each night.
- **A consistent sleep schedule** helps teens feel less tired. Your teen may be tempted to sleep until noon on weekends, but remind him that it only makes

waking up harder on Monday morning. Create a routine for going to bed and waking up.

- **Nothing replaces good sleep.** Vitamins, pills and drinks with caffeine are not substitutes for a night of restful sleep.
- **Sleep deprivation** causes the same impairment as having a blood alcohol content of .08 percent. This means that driving while sleepy is extremely dangerous.
- **Using technology**, eating, drinking and exercising in the hours right before bedtime makes it harder to sleep. Suggest quiet, calm activities that will relax his brain.

Source: "Teens and Sleep," National Sleep Foundation, nswc.com/high_sleep.

Make sure your teen has goals and boundaries this summer



Your teen's need for structure and learning doesn't end on the last day of school.

But without a plan, she may end up just drifting through the summer.

To help your teenager have a productive summer:

- **Encourage learning goals.** Decades of research show that when teens simply let their brains go on vacation all summer, their achievement tends to slip. So help your teen set some learning goals. Perhaps she wants to learn how to play a musical instrument. Or maybe she wants to read all the books in a series. Whatever her goal, help her make a plan to achieve it.

- **Set boundaries.** You may decide to relax some of your family rules. For example, you may push back bedtime if your teen doesn't have to get up for a job or an activity. But don't excuse your teen from *all* expectations. She should still have to contribute around the house and follow basic rules. She should also stick to recreational screen time limits. No teen should waste the summer staring at a screen.
- **Schedule physical activity.** Studies show that teens often gain weight over the summer. So schedule a time when your whole family can exercise. Take a walk in a nearby park. Visit a community recreation center and sign up for a summer class.

Q: My son is failing two classes. He has missed a lot of school this year—sometimes because he cut classes. Now he says he just wants to give up and drop out. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Students who fall behind in one or more classes often begin to feel that there is no chance they can ever catch up. But if you work with the school, you can help your son get back on track. The steps you and your teen take now will affect his entire future.

Be sure to:

- **Talk with his teachers.** Find out if it is possible for him to bring his grades up before the end of the year. Can he make up any missed work? Can he do extra credit? If he struggles with the class material, should he work with a tutor to get caught up?
- **Talk with his counselor.** Together, develop a plan to help your son get back on track so he can graduate. Find out if there is any additional support available for struggling students.
- **Help your son see why staying in school is so important.** Have him research the types of jobs he can get without a high school diploma. A minimum wage job may seem fine now if he's living at home. But how far will that money go when he wants to move out, drive a car and have a life of his own?
- **Monitor his attendance.** Your son needs to make a commitment to be in *every* class *every* day. Check in with teachers on a regular basis to ensure your son is in school.

It Matters: Summer Learning

Volunteering can teach your teen valuable lessons



Students can learn important lessons outside the classroom. That's especially true if they volunteer over

the summer.

Research shows that summer volunteer jobs can help teens develop skills they'll use in school and in future careers. They can learn critical thinking as they try to figure out how to solve a real-world problem. They can learn how to work with others. They develop self-confidence. And they learn that they *can* make a difference.

But teens need to choose their summer volunteer experiences carefully. Help your teen:

- **Think about his interests.** Your teen will learn more and have a better time if he's doing something he finds interesting. If he loves people, he should look for a volunteer job that will allow him to interact with others. If he has a certain career in mind, he should try to get some hands-on experience in that field.
- **Do some research.** Encourage your teen to search online for opportunities. He should also ask his friends about their volunteer experiences.
- **Keep his commitments.** Although your teen won't be earning a paycheck, he will have to be dependable. He should consider the amount of time he has to offer *before* he makes a commitment.

Source: M. Price-Mitchell, Ph.D., "What's Summer? Hands-On Learning Time for Teens!" *Psychology Today*, niscw.com/high_service.

Summer reading strengthens imagination and persistence

Students who read what they want over the summer months are more likely to keep on reading than those who don't. And summer reading has a positive impact well beyond the last page of the book.

Getting caught up in a book:

- **Teaches persistence.** Most teens can't finish a book in a single reading. That means they have to figure out ways to complete their other tasks so they can get back to reading!
- **Strengthens the imagination.** When teens get a chance to see another world, or to see the world through someone else's eyes, it helps them become more creative thinkers.
- **Prevents the "summer slide."** Reading over the summer builds skills and helps teens avoid learning loss.
To help your teen find books she will love, encourage her to:



- **Talk to friends.** What books have they enjoyed reading?
- **Look online.** There are many websites, including *Goodreads.com*, that will allow your teen to explore all genres of books.
- **Go to the library.** She can just browse the shelves or ask the librarian for suggestions.

Use the summer months to restock your teen's 'toolbox'



A mechanic would never work on a car without a set of tools. Yet some parents send teens into the world without a "toolbox" of life skills.

The summer months are a great time to focus on important skills, such as:

- **Responsibility.** Give your teen responsibility for a few areas of her life this summer. If she hasn't had experience managing

finances, help her set up her own bank account.

- **Thinking ahead.** Your 17-year-old may not know what she wants to do as an adult. But a summer job (even if it's unpaid) can help her figure it out.
- **Self-reliance.** Some kids come home from college with a month's worth of laundry. Be sure your teen knows how to care for her clothes. Also teach her to prepare simple meals.