

# 7 Rules for Parents

Drawing on the latest scientific studies of adolescents, Laurence Steinberg, a professor of psychology at Temple University, offers this advice for the parents of teens:

## 1. WHAT YOU DO MATTERS

Many parents mistakenly believe that by the time children have become teenagers, there's nothing more a parent can do. Wrong. Studies clearly show that good parenting continues to help teenagers develop in healthy ways, stay out of trouble and do well in school.

## 2. YOU CAN'T BE TOO LOVING

Don't hold back when it comes to pouring on the praise and showing physical affection. There is no evidence that adolescents are harmed by

having parents who are unabashedly loving—as long as you don't embarrass them in front of their friends.

## 3. STAY INVOLVED

Many parents who were actively involved in their child's life during the early years withdraw when their child becomes a teenager. This is a mistake. It's just as important for you to be involved now—maybe even more so. Participate in school programs. Get to know your child's friends. Spend time together.

## 4. ADAPT YOUR PARENTING

Many parenting strategies that work at one age stop working at the next stage of development. As children get older, for example, their ability to reason improves dramatically, and they will challenge you if what you are asking doesn't make sense.

## 5. SET LIMITS

The most important thing chil-



## BONDING: Don't be afraid to pour on the praise and show physical affection

dren need from their parents is love, but a close second is structure. Even teenagers need rules and limits. Be firm but fair. Relax your rules bit by bit as your child demonstrates more maturity. If he or she can't handle the freedom, tighten the reins and try again in a few months.

## 6. FOSTER INDEPENDENCE

Many parents erroneously equate their teenager's drive for independence with rebelliousness, disobedience or disrespect. It's healthy for adolescents to push for auton-

omy. Give your children the psychological space they need to learn to be self-reliant, and resist the temptation to micromanage.

## 7. EXPLAIN YOUR DECISIONS

Good parents have expectations, but in order for your teenager to live up to them, your rules and decisions have to be clear and appropriate. As your child becomes more adept at reasoning, it's no longer good enough to say "Because I said so."

*Laurence Steinberg's most recent book is The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting (Simon & Schuster)*