

Connecting With Your Teen

Teens can be confusing for parents to understand. It starts when kids seem embarrassed to be around their parents at school events. At times they seem happy to hang out at home with family. At other times, not as much. The mixed messages can be challenging to interpret. If a teen's moods are misunderstood as rejection, parents might wonder if it's time to stop trying to connect. After too many bristly reactions and one-word answers, parents start to believe they should give their teen more space. Yet, when they do, their teen notices. While teens tend to push parents away, later they may show signs that parents aren't doing enough. They can sense when parents have a lot going on, so they might stop asking them to come to school events. "There's parent-teacher conferences, but do you care?" Most parents care a lot.

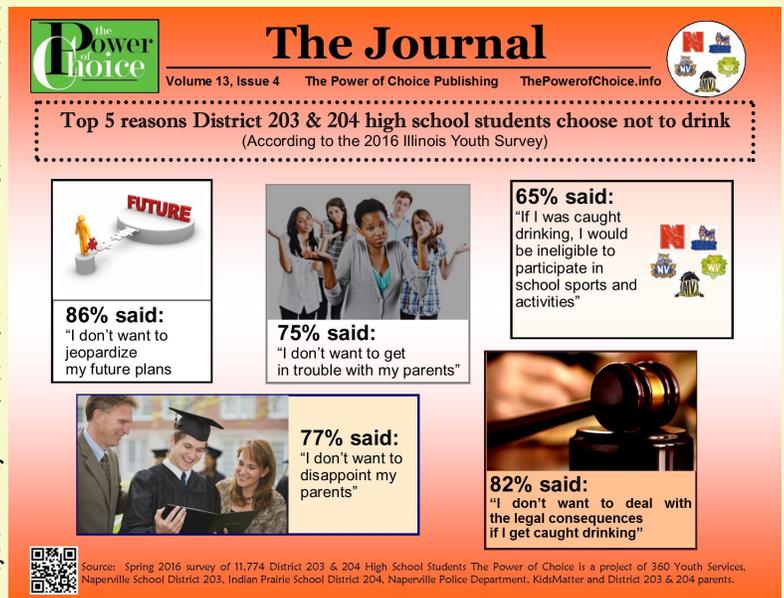
If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. Some parents may believe staying close is no longer a possibility during the teenage years. It can be maddening to be a parent to know the right thing to do.

Much more is going on in the mind of a teen besides school. Developmentally, adolescence is when a child begins to create a separate identity from their parents. The first time this happens is when toddlers reject their parents' help, as noted by child psychiatrist Margaret Mahler. While teens might not want parents to volunteer as much at high school, they still want to know that parents care enough to try to be a part of their life and the things they do.

Initially, parents might think attending events is all that is needed to make that connection. Showing up is half the battle. Once you show up and have enough time around your teen, it's the little moments that pop up when you can connect. The effort made to get to know your teen matters. Let them confide in you without judgment. Knowing you care might impact their decision making in a positive way. Developing that one-on-one relationship can be a big part of connecting with your teen.

Sometimes what teens are really thinking may surprise parents. Check out the box: 77% of teens say they don't drink alcohol because they don't want to disappoint their parents. Teens really do care what their parents think.

It may not be "cool" to want to hang out with your parents but it's "cool" to have parents who want to hang out with you. Don't give up on your teen. Even when it may seem at times that they are so annoyed by you they could scream, the truth is they just want to know that you are on their side.



The Journal
Volume 13, Issue 4 The Power of Choice Publishing ThePowerofChoice.info

Top 5 reasons District 203 & 204 high school students choose not to drink
(According to the 2016 Illinois Youth Survey)

- 86% said:** "I don't want to jeopardize my future plans" (Image: Future graphic)
- 75% said:** "I don't want to get in trouble with my parents" (Image: Teen group)
- 65% said:** "If I was caught drinking, I would be ineligible to participate in school sports and activities" (Image: Sports equipment)
- 77% said:** "I don't want to disappoint my parents" (Image: Family photo)
- 82% said:** "I don't want to deal with the legal consequences if I get caught drinking" (Image: Gavel)

Source: Spring 2016 survey of 11,774 District 203 & 204 High School Students. The Power of Choice is a project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter and District 203 & 204 parents.

DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day Medication Disposal Event

Saturday, April 28: 10AM - 2PM

Naperville Police Department
1350 Aurora Ave.

TURN IN UNUSED OR EXPIRED MEDICATION



No liquids, needles, or inhalers

For more information,
call 630-420-6667

naperville-il.us | communityallianceforprevention.org

Little Ways You Can Connect:

- **Talk about your day**—Often the smallest detail from your busy day can spark a conversation about theirs.
- **Go one-on-one**—Undivided attention is something that most teens don't get but could always use. Take some time made just for them.
- **Seize the moment**—Look for opportunities to interact with your teen rather than trying to create them.

ThePowerofChoice.info



Connect with other parents at:
[Power of Choice-Parents Use Your Power](http://PowerofChoice-ParentsUseYourPower)