



Pause for a child

Teenagers think they've got it hard, but you're likely the one fretting over whether they're making wise decisions and just how much freedom to give them.

The tug of war between your desire to steer your child and your teen's longing for independence is normal. They think they know it all and you're convinced their knowledge amounts to zilch.

From substance abuse and dating violence to sex and peer pressure, the issues teens face can be serious.

During this stage of development they're making tough choices, discovering what they value and possibly learning from mistakes.

While it's natural to want to protect them, it's most helpful to educate them about the consequences of choices and teach them how to make wise ones.

Find subtle ways to slip important messages into your conversations.

While you're watching a movie together, comment on the questionable choices of some of the characters. When you read a news report about underage drinking, share a story with your teen and discuss how he would handle a similar situation.

When your child shares something worrisome, calmly help him explore his options. You'll build trust and teach him to come to you when he needs solid advice.

You can't protect teens from the world. Your job now is to be ready and available to help steer them toward their dreams.

