

Not in Kansas Anymore

Parents often experience anxiety and worry as their children enter high school. Worries about their children often include: encountering new and unfamiliar influences, choosing undesirable friends, the possibility they may succumb to peer-pressures, and fear of their grades falling and messing up their chances of getting into a good college/university.

All of these concerns are valid, but don't let them harm your relationship with your teenager. Your teenager is going through tremendous change. He/she went from being upper-classman as an eight-grader to being the youngest and maybe even the smallest in a new school. They went from just receiving a diploma to getting hit with the realization that they have another four years until they achieve another one. They have to establish their place in the school and sometimes, even have to make new friends. This is the time to make sure you continue to be involved in your freshman's life, but try to do so without adding more stress to either of you. Ask them:

- about the specifics of their school day,
- who they sit with at lunch?
- which classmates they like best?
- what subject they find easiest? Hardest? And why?

Make it your business to know their friends. Very few teens will turn down an invitation to get ice cream or McDonalds. By doing this, you not only show your teenager that you are interested in their life, but you also get an understanding of what kind of young adult your teenager is turning into.

As you talk to your teenager:

- give them your full attention; don't multi-task when asking how their school day went;
- make clear eye contact, letting them know you are connected;
- when the distractions come (other siblings, a phone call), put them on hold until later.

Your encouragement is important. Do not be put off when they don't want to open up. Sometimes it takes time to get a response. Continue to be available and let them know you're interested in what's happening in their lives. This is the time they need to take on more responsibility, for themselves, their school work, and their actions. This time of life might be scary for you, but remember that your teen may feel overwhelmed as well

Be encouraged! Knowing you care and feeling your support can improve your child's self-esteem and help establish a close parent-teen relationship.

