



# Your Role When Parenting a Teen

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# Parenting a Teen: What's Your Role?

Parenting a teen can be an extremely stressful stage for parents. They often feel overwhelmed and sucked into the wild roller coaster ride of adolescence. This can leave a parent unsure of what a healthy role looks like.

## **Why are these years so important?**

It is vital to remember that as a parent of a teen you are helping them connect their childhood to their adulthood. This is a time where they are not as dependent as they once were; however, they are also not too independent yet. As a teen is exploring this path to adulthood, they will often seek to be understood as they undergo many changes.

Developmentally they are attempting to find their sense of self and where they fit in with friends, family, and in the world. They are shifting their identity from what mom and dad think, to what their peers think. Their minds are crazily trying to answer the question, "Who am I?" As they shift like a chameleon in and out of identity options, they question everything. They are collecting all the experiences they have had and are attempting to form their own belief system, likes, and dislikes.

## **What's my role as the parent of a teen?**

As you attempt to equip your teen for adulthood, it is helpful to know you have four key roles.

**1. Help them learn responsibility.** You can do this by not doing everything for them and giving them rites of passages. Allowing your teen to explore, succeed, and fail at appropriate developmental milestones can help them learn significant life lessons. You can also help your teen learn responsibility through natural and logical consequences. Natural consequences are easy, in that they have a large ripple effect without much need for you to talk about them. Natural consequences speak loudly on their own. Logical consequences are best used in situations where a teen knows the cause and effect of their choices and the negative result is directly related to the action. For example, if you break curfew, you get to spend the whole weekend with mom and dad. Be sure to pick your battles with your teen. You cannot go to blows over every little thing. It is not worth risking the loss of the relationship over frivolous things. You are better off saving your battles for things having to do with moral value; such as behaviors dealing with respect for authority, honesty, and issues with addictive behaviors.

**2. Teach them communication skills.** If you want them to learn to speak “adult”, then you need to model it and practice it with them. Be open and honest with your child to invite them to open up to you. Be careful to not criticize a quiet teen, as it may make them retreat further into their shell. Talk about the hard topics even if you feel uncomfortable. It is better that they hear it from you as well as their surrounding environment.

**3. Teach them decision-making skills.** This means it is important for them to be given the chance to make decisions. **If you coddle your teen and do everything for them, they will feel insecure about making decisions they face as they enter the adult world.** Giving them a “trial run” while they still have your support can boost their confidence, and better prepare them for life choices they have ahead of them. Enabling your teen to not make some decisions will do them a disservice and not properly groom them for the real world.

**4. Build a relationship with them.** As they are appropriately distancing from you, they are letting go of the dependence they once had on you as their parent. This is a healthy part of development. However, many



parents struggle with this and take it personally. Having a relationship with them means you are the one stable thing in their crazy life, even if it is from a distance. Know it is healthy for them to disconnect from the family, and connect to friends and activities. But just because this is normal does not mean you do not have boundaries. Remember that having rules without a relationship will result in rebellion. As you develop this relationship, it is important to not smother your teen and to require mutual respect in the relationship. You are not to be their friend, but a boundary enforcer, supporter, prayer warrior, unconditional lover, and a stable force in their out of control world.

As you seek to master your role as the parent of a teen, remember that you need support as well. Leaning on your spouse, friends, and loved ones through the tough times and to seek out wise counsel is important. It may be necessary to allow your teen to reach out to an adult other than you to guide and mentor them. It is not always as personal as it may feel. Being grateful that your teen has a support system outside of the family is a good thing. It encompasses the concept of “It takes a village to raise a child”. As you attempt to succeed as a parent to a teen, stay focused on your role and remember: “This too shall pass”.

If you are having trouble parenting your teen, contact Renewed Horizon to set up an appointment.

# About Renewed Horizon

Renewed Horizon is a Christian counseling practice that serves individuals, couples, families, and teens to address difficulties in life. It is a place to find guidance, healing, and hope when life feels hopeless and unimaginable.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” ~ II Corinthians 5:17*



Teri Claassen received her Bachelor’s Degree from Anderson University with a double major in Psychology and Family Science. She completed her graduate studies at Indiana University where she received her Masters in Social Work.



Teri is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Florida and Indiana and a Licensed Clinical Addictions Counselor in Indiana.

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