

Parent-Youth *Cooperation*

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by

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Privileges and responsibilities

Since maturity comes with growth and experience, parents should willingly and with confidence give more freedom to children as they grow.

Generally youth, even more than the adult, wants to do well. But youth often fails through misunderstanding and inexperience. Young people cannot be expected to conform to poorly defined or inconsistent standards which are out of touch with reality.

It is the responsibility of the parent to define limits clearly in terms of the young person's maturity and then keep hands off. Parents should be very careful to do their part.

Parents should constantly re-evaluate these limits as youth matures and as the social demands change. Parents could well grow along with their children in their conception of life and its responsibilities.

The handling of money

Young people need regular allowances or earnings in order to gain skill in handling money. To build this skill, responsibilities for purchasing clothing and personal possessions should be increased as young people mature, either through a larger allowance or greater opportunities for earning money.

Family financial situations should be discussed calmly in the presence of youth in order to demonstrate by example how adults think through financial problems.

Within understandable limits, the adolescent should be free to spend without being called upon to answer for his expenditures in detail. This is valuable budget training both for present and later life.

The family car

In early adolescence, instruction and practice in safe driving should be given either by parents or others. Whether parents like it or not, young people get access to cars. Lacking instruction and skill, they may meet accident and tragedy.

To set a good example, parents should observe safety rules carefully and drive at moderate speeds.

Since many controversies arise over the use of the family car, some plan for sharing in its use should be worked out in conference with the young people.

Personal-social relations

Matters of social relations and adjustment should be discussed with youth in a friendly and informal way at various times without emphasis upon control. Since the growing person meets the same problems his parents met in their youth, he will, if they are helpful, look to them for aid and counsel. But if controls are matters of command, and social adjustment is discussed only when there is serious difficulty, youth is not likely to benefit from parent experience or help.

Parents should move slowly in trying to select their children's friends as social groupings are affected by many factors beyond the parents' control. It is better to develop standards within the grasp of young people and then permit them to make their own choices.

Adolescents, who react strongly to the influence of their fellows, face many conflicts between home standards and the codes of their friends. They need help, wise counsel, and sympathetic understanding in order to solve these conflicts.

Negative measures such as criticism, condemnation, or refusals are likely to be ineffective. While parents and older persons can do much to provide facilities, generally young people must meet and solve their own social problems.

Adjustment to opposite sex

The teen age is the "boy meet girl" period when both seek a life-mate. Social life under good auspices is a necessity.

Parents should be prepared to answer the questions of children and youth—frankly, honestly, and casually—in much the same way as they answer questions about other matters.

If parents have difficulty in talking with children and youth about sex, they should provide themselves with good books on the subject and study until they have the vocabulary and knowledge with which to answer questions.

When the young person reaches puberty, or the transition from childhood to adolescence, parents should take particular care to explain the new physical changes, feelings, and attitudes which may frighten or disturb him.

No matter how innocent the parent may wish to keep his child, he must recognize that both growing up and sex interests are normal developments that come to every maturing person and see that the basic problem is one of good adjustments that will lead to a happy and creative family life.



Parent attitudes

Parents should recognize the changing character of the interests, activities, and social demands put upon the growing person.

Their task with youth is primarily one of building in him skills and ability to solve his own problems. Then, with full confidence, they can permit him to go ahead.

Parents should expect some storm and stress. The protests of adolescents are steps toward self reliance and independence. The adolescent is becoming an adult and wants to speak and to be heard. Without becoming emotional the parent should listen to youth's views. Even though he thinks them childish, he should not say or act so—but reason with him as with another adult. Good management means lessening controls, giving responsibilities, creating opportunities to make decisions—in short—promoting maturity.

Care should be taken in comparing children. Comparison should not involve things that cannot be helped, such as physical features. Equally important is refraining from regularly and consistently playing up one member of the family at the expense of another.

Parents need to be patient with youth during these years of development. The adult who is more expert tends to be impatient with the trials and failures of youth and to forget that he once learned in the same way and that only by trials and failures can skill be achieved.

An important element in control is the kind of person the parent is. The enthusiastic, warm, and adaptable parent often obtains results with youth that the nervous, cold, and rigid parent does not achieve.

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