



# Tips for Parents of Tweens/Teens (10-18 years)

**SEXTING** - Teens need your help to navigate the possibility of receiving or sending a nude photo. Ask if they know the potential consequences to assure that your teen understands that possessing nude photos of anyone underage is illegal, that photos can go viral, can be used as blackmail, and can hurt people. Read an article on sexting and discuss it together.

**SEXUAL ACTS, TALK OR TEXT** - Hormones rage at puberty. Help your children make educated decisions. Talk about your values and expectations instead of reacting after discovery. Instead of shaming a child for sexual interest, listen to them about what they believe is appropriate and respectful behavior and what is not. Share with them your point of view.

**RUNNING AWAY** - An unsafe home environment is the most common reason for running away. Provide your child with a safe and supportive environment with open communication.

## INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

**Threatening to not let them come back home.**

“Do you want me to help you pack?”

“You are grounded for the rest of your life”

**Locking them in their room**

- “Tell me why you felt you had to run away.”
- I understand that you felt you needed to run away. I felt rejected and unappreciated. Can you help me understand what was bothering you?
- “What can I do to make you feel safe at home?”
- It scared me that you ran away. Let’s talk about how we can make living at home feel better.
- “I was scared when I didn’t know where to find you.
- “I want you to be happy here. Can you tell me why you ran away?” Listen to why they ran away. Understand that this was a solution to their problem. Discuss better solutions.

**ILLEGAL ACTIVITY – ALCOHOL, DRUGS** - Peer pressure plays a big role in substance use. Help your child understand the effects of drug and alcohol use. Set a positive example around substance use at home.

## INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

“You are heading straight for jail!”

“You are grounded!”

- “Underage drinking is a serious crime and we both can get into trouble because I’m responsible for your behavior.”
- “Being charged with a DUI is a crime that will stay on your record. It can prevent you from getting into college you want to go to or getting your dream job down the line.” Or, “Drinking numbs your reflexes and you won’t be able to make decisions as fast and clear. That puts you and others in danger.”

- **Help your child rehearse what to he/she would like to say to his/her peers:** “I’ll get in trouble with my parents if I smoke.”
- **Make a pact with your child:** “I want you to be safe. If you want to leave a situation, all you have to do is text or call me and I will pick you up from anywhere at any time without asking questions.”
- **Have a “code” text message** for when your child needs your help to get out of a peer pressure situation. Decide together what they want you to do or say when they text you the code message.

## TALKING BACK, BREAKING HOUSE RULES

Have a family meeting and collaborate with your teenager on house rules. Remember, complicated decision-making parts of the brain are not fully developed. Teenagers need help solving problems and making good decisions.

## INSTEAD OF SAYING ... TRY...

“What were you thinking?”

“You are going to be punished if you are late again.”

“Don’t talk to me that way!”

- “Let’s talk about what happened and what might work better in the future.”
- “Help me understand why you were late tonight.” “If you want to go out on Friday nights, you need to be back on time.”
- “I worry when you aren’t home at the time we agreed upon. What makes it difficult to make it home on time?”
- “When you talk to me that way, it’s hard for me to listen. I want to hear you. If you lower your volume, I can listen better

**PHONE USE** - Work together to set some rules around phone use and decide together on consequences when those rules are broken.

## INSTEAD OF ... TRY...

**Threatening a child with phone removal**

Saying, “You will lose your phone if you use it during the night.”

- Calmly remind them of your agreement.
- “We agreed that phone hours are from 7:30am till 7:30pm on school nights, and 9pm on weekends.” Are you having a hard time following through? Listen to why they are struggling with the agreement.

**INAPPROPRIATE DRESS** - Your child is learning about his/her sexuality and needs your guidance support on how their clothing may influence others. Don’t shame or humiliate. Accept that this will be an ongoing conversation.

## INSTEAD OF SAYING... TRY...

“You look ridiculous when you wear that.”

“Are you really wearing that?”

- “Dressing in a way that shows you deserve respect is important to me and people respecting you is important to me. I’m uncomfortable with what you are wearing.” Listen to why they selected this clothing.
- Respectfully, state your concern about what they are wearing. “I notice that this outfit makes you look much older than you are. I’m uncomfortable with that.” “Tell me what you like about this outfit.”

# Dear Parents,

## Did you know that –



- Spanking **shrinks brains.**

Harvard Medical School found that kids who are spanked just once a month had **14-19% smaller brains in the decision-making area.**<sup>1</sup> These were children who remembered being spanked at least 12 times a year and once with a belt, paddle or brush, but were not injured or spanked in anger.

- 1,574 studies found that **spanking is harmful.**

- Even ‘everyday spanking’ is **consistently associated with:**

- **More** aggression
- **More** negative relationships with parents
- **Lower** cognitive ability
- **Substance** abuse
- **More** fighting
- **Weaker** moral values
- **Delinquent** behavior
- **More** mental health problems
- **Lower** self-esteem
- **More** antisocial behavior
- **Lower** self-control<sup>2</sup>

- Spanking **lowers IQ.**

The University of New Hampshire found that American children who are spanked at ages 2-4 have **5 less IQ points** than non-spanked children, even years later. Children spanked at ages 5-9 have **2.8 less IQ points.**<sup>3</sup>

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does this mean that everyone who was spanked as a child has problems?** No, it means that spanking doesn’t help children learn what we want them to learn. Every time we spank a child, we raise the risk that the child will develop problems.
- **Why is this so?** Spanking focuses on the behavior and misses the underlying need. It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but the child hasn’t learned how to do things differently. And it can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and prevent some children from telling about sexual abuse for fear of further punishment.
- **But I was spanked and turned out okay?** Today, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about how children learn and develop. We know other ways of teaching children that don’t have these risks and harms.

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1. Tomoda, A., Suzuki, H., Rabi, K., Sheu, Y., Polcari, A., & Teicher, M.H. (2010). Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment. *Neuroimage*, 47(Suppl. 2), T66–T71.

2. Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453–469. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>

3. Straus, M. & Paschall, M.J. Corporal punishment by mothers and development of children’s cognitive ability: A longitudinal study of two nationally representative age cohorts. (2009). *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(5): 459. doi:10.1080/10926770903035168

