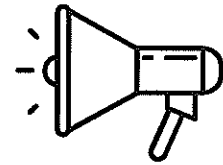


# TIPSHEET: COMMUNICATION

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- **Strategic timing:** Pick the best days/times of day to talk to your teen. Ideally, these are times when you and your teen are well-rested and in a good mood.
- **Schedule positive talk:** Schedule time each day to ask your teen about something positive in their life.
- **Schedule positive activities:** Schedule a time to do an activity together that your teen enjoys, and while engaged in that activity, limit your conversations to only positive topics.
- **Avoid "digging up bones":** When addressing a negative behavior displayed by your teen, focus on the current situation rather than bringing up the past or generalizing ("you always do this").
- **Avoid "throwing stones":** Express frustration without yelling, calling names, or making sarcastic comments.
- **Implement an Exit & Wait Plan:** An Exit & Wait Plan can be helpful when conversations become heated and unproductive. Here's how it works:
  - Develop the Exit & Wait Plan when you and your teen are calm and not arguing.
  - Define behaviors that would trigger the Exit & Wait Plan, like raised voices or certain phrases.
  - Set a verbal warning (e.g., "I need to Exit & Wait"). This should be "I" because you should not be telling the other person to Exit & Wait. You both will Exit & Wait, but if you are saying the warning then it is about you needing to Exit the immediate situation.
  - Make clear that the exiting is not to avoid the issue altogether or to avoid communicating (i.e., you will come back together to resolve this situation, but you need a short break to get your anger/frustration/annoyance under better control).
  - Have a plan of where each person goes when they Exit (e.g., rooms, porch, yard).
  - The Exit location should not be far away from the house/property (e.g., this is not a plan so that the teen can leave and go to their friend's house).
  - No following the other person! End the conversation, exit, and wait as agreed upon.
  - Identify what each person will do while they Wait (e.g., relaxation or distraction strategy).
  - Determine how you will know things are calm again/length of time for the Exit.
  - Develop a plan for calmly talking through the situation.
  - Write down the Plan and practice it to make sure everyone knows what to do.

- **Follow the 90-second rule:** If your teen does or says something upsetting, wait 90 seconds before responding (e.g., set a timer on your phone). During those 90 seconds, take a deep breath, resist the urge to act impulsively, think through the consequences of how you respond, and then respond. In some cases, it might make sense to wait to respond in a day or two, after you can think over the situation more.
- **Use time-out:** If your teen starts yelling, point out that s/he is upset and needs time to cool off. Suggest 15-20 minutes of time to calm down so the two of you can resume a more constructive conversation.
- **Seek professional help:** Sometimes, a family can benefit from working with a therapist on improving communication. If you have tried other efforts to improve communication and it hasn't helped, call a local clinic to schedule an assessment for family treatment services.

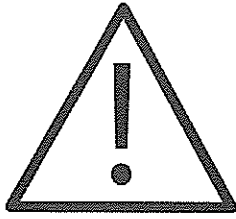


# TIPSHEET: EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

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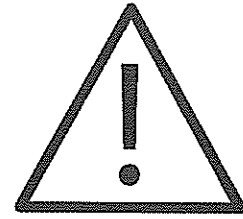


- **Write rules down:** Develop a written list of rules for your teen to follow at home and in the community.
- **Partner with your teen to determine consequences:** Instead of you coming up with the consequence after your teen breaks an established rule, ask them to propose 3 possible consequences that you will pick from (if they are reasonable consequences). Because the consequence is their idea, they might be more likely to comply. Of note, you can also use this approach when making the list of rules, as described above. For example, you might negotiate a list of chores, an academic goal, or a curfew that everyone finds satisfactory.
- **Make consequences specific, immediate, and consistent:** When a rule is broken, name the specific problem behavior and resulting consequence. To be most effective, the consequence should be delivered immediately and every single time the problem behavior occurs.
- Provide positive reinforcement whenever your teen displays a desired behavior. Here are some actions to consider:
  - **Catch them being good:** Monitor your teen's activities frequently so you have more chances to observe them 'being good.' Let your teen know that you notice their good behavior as well as their misbehavior.
  - **Be specific:** When you praise your teen, tell them exactly why they are being praised. For example, "You did a great job of not interrupting me while I was speaking on the phone."
  - **Give immediate feedback:** Give positive feedback immediately. Don't wait a long time after the good behavior occurs to offer praise.
  - **Avoid backhanded compliments:** It is important to avoid using backhanded compliments. For example, it is not a good idea to say something like: "That's good; why can't you do that more often?"
  - **Use third-handed compliments:** Third-handed compliments can be very effective. Third-handed compliments occur when one person tells another person about the teen's good behavior in the teen's presence. For example, when one parent comes home from work, the other parent talks about the teen's good behavior that occurred that afternoon.
- **Seek professional help:** Sometimes, a parent needs support in discipline techniques. These may be called "parenting skills classes" in your community or online. You also might call a local clinic to see if they can offer help with parenting and discipline techniques.



# TIPSHEET: SUBSTANCE USE

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- **Make a monitoring plan:** One of the most effective ways of preventing substance use is to have an ironclad monitoring plan. Follow these top rules for effective monitoring:
  - **Know where your teen is at all times — physically and virtually:** Keep tabs on your teen's physical location and internet/social media use. Use web browser tools and software designed to block certain sites that promote substance use and other risky behaviors. Concerns about their privacy can be addressed in an open and honest conversation, where you can clearly say that monitoring is meant only to help protect them from harm, not to be nosy or intrusive.
  - **Get to know your teen's friends — both online and off:** And, while you're at it, get to know your teen's friends' parents, too. Get together with the parents to discuss your children and any recent incidents related to alcohol or drugs in your community.
  - **Find out how your teen plans to spend his or her day:** Looking for something to discuss during dinner? This is a great one. "So...what are you planning to do tomorrow that you're excited about?"
  - **Limit the time your teen spends without adult supervision:** After-school hours are a risky time for teens to be on their own. If you or another adult you trust can't be home with your teen, explore after-school programs. If that's not possible, try to check in on your teen periodically when they're home alone.
  - **Know the apps and other technology your teen is using — and use it yourself:** Pay attention to the types of social media and other apps your teen is using and make sure they are using them within established limits and guidelines that you've set. Know their passwords and scan their apps from time to time to check for unhealthy or unsafe activity.
  - **Know how much money your teen has and how that money is spent:** If they have a lot of cash on hand, access to vapes, alcohol, or other substances is easier. Limit the access they have to cash. Have your teen bring you receipts for any purchases made or use a debit card where you can see where and when they use it.
- **Promote positive sensation seeking within safe boundaries:** Teen brains are wired to seek new experiences. Therefore, let teens have plenty of opportunities for seeking safe thrills. Try out for a team. Have a first date. Take part in a play. These positive opportunities to stretch may largely fill their drive to seek new experiences. If teens' lives are stimulating within safe boundaries, there may be less of a need to go beyond them.
- **Support positive peer influences:** Peers hold powerful influence over each other. However, that influence can as easily be positive as negative. We can't choose our teen's friends, but we can influence the likelihood that they will be surrounded by supportive, caring friends who make wise choices about substance use and other risky behaviors. We do this when we support participation in after school, community, and religious programs or activities. We also do this when we know their friends' parents and share common rules so that our teens can stay well within our boundaries and not feel like an outcast.

- **Monitor for warning signs:** Figuring out if your child is using substances can be challenging. Many of the signs and symptoms are typical teen or young adult behavior. Many are also symptoms of mental health issues, including depression or anxiety. If you have reason to suspect use, don't be afraid to err on the side of caution. Prepare to take action and have a conversation during which you can ask direct questions like "Have you been drinking, vaping or using drugs?" No parent wants to hear "yes," but being prepared for how you would respond can be the starting point for a more positive outcome. Here are some things to look for:

- **Common warning signs:**

- *Shifts in mood & personality:*

- Sullen, withdrawn, or depressed
- Less motivated
- Silent, uncommunicative
- Hostile, angry, uncooperative
- Deceitful or secretive
- Unable to focus
- Hyperactive or unusually elated

- *Behavioral changes:*

- Changed relationships with family members or friends
- Absenteeism or a loss of interest in school, work, or other activities
- Avoids eye contact
- Locks doors
- Disappears for long periods of time
- Goes out often, frequently breaking curfew
- Secretive with the use of their phone
- Makes endless excuses
- Uses chewing gum or mints to cover up breath
- Often uses over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening or nasal irritation
- Has cash flow problems
- Has become unusually clumsy: stumbling, lacking coordination, poor balance
- Has periods of sleeplessness or high energy, followed by long periods of "catch up" sleep

- *Hygiene & appearance:*

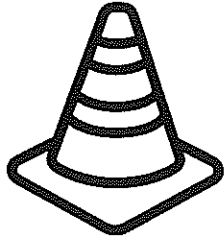
- Smell of smoke or other unusual smells on breath or on clothes
- Messier than usual appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Frequently red or flushed cheeks or face
- Burns or soot on fingers or lips
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)

- *Physical health:*

- Frequent sickness
- Unusually tired and/or lethargic
- Unable to speak intelligibly, slurred speech or rapid-fire speech
- Nosebleeds and/or runny nose, not caused by allergies or a cold
- Sores, spots around mouth
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Frequent perspiration
- Seizures and/or vomiting

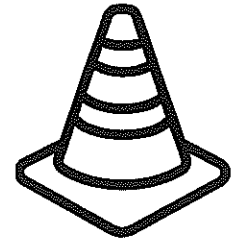
- **How and where to look for warning signs:**

- **Use your nose:** Have a real, face-to-face conversation when your teen comes home after hanging out with friends. If there has been drinking or smoking, the smell will be on their breath, on their clothing, and in their hair.
  - **Look them in the eyes:** Pay attention to their eyes, which will be red and heavy-lidded, with constricted pupils if they've used marijuana. Pupils will be dilated, and they may have difficulty focusing if they've been drinking. In addition, red, flushed color of the face and cheeks can also be a sign of drinking.
  - **Watch their behavior:** How do they act after a night out with friends? Are they particularly loud and obnoxious, or laughing hysterically at nothing? Unusually clumsy to the point of stumbling into furniture and walls, tripping over their own feet and knocking things over? Sullen, withdrawn, and unusually tired and slack-eyed for the hour of night? Do they look queasy and stumble into the bathroom? These are all signs that they could have been drinking or using marijuana or other substances. Having a conversation with them, even if it's about mundane things like TV shows, sports, or the day's weather can give you a chance to observe them when they come home from being out with friends.
  - **Search their spaces:** The limits you set with your child don't stop at the front door or their bedroom door. If you have cause for concern, it's important to find out what's going on. Be prepared to explain your reasons for a search though, whether or not you tell them about it beforehand. You can let them know it's out of concern for their health and safety. Common places to conceal vapes, alcohol, drugs or paraphernalia include:
    - Inside drawers, beneath or between other items
    - In small boxes or cases — think jewelry, makeup or pencil cases, or cases for earbuds
    - Under a bed or other pieces of furniture
    - In between or inside books
    - Inside backpacks or other bags
    - Under a loose floorboard
    - Inside over-the-counter medicine containers (Tylenol, Advil, etc.)
    - Inside empty candy bags such as M&Ms or Skittles
    - In fake soda cans or other fake containers designed to conceal
    - Don't overlook your teen's cell phone or other digital devices — do you recognize their frequent contacts? Do recent messages or social media posts hint at drug use or contradict what they've told you?
  - **Consider a drug test:** If you're working with a juvenile probation officer who uses "instant drug tests," you could ask if you could take one home to test your child at a random time over the weekend. Or, you could purchase an instant test at the drug store or online. Prepare yourself ahead of time for whether the results show drug use or not.
- **Seek professional help:** If your teen is experiencing a substance use problem, they may require formal treatment services. Call a local clinic to schedule an assessment.

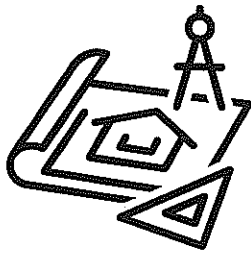


# TIPSHEET: ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, & STRESS

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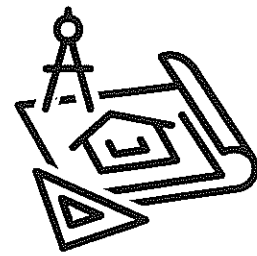


- **Get physical:** Help your teen get more activity and exercise, such as going on walks or runs, doing exercise videos, or finding a gym or sports team to join.
- **Schedule prosocial activities:** Find and schedule one or more activities to fill up your teen's time. This may be through their school, through a community center or local parks, programs at your library, through your church, volunteering, etc.
- **Teach coping skills:** Help your teen develop coping skills, such as writing in a journal, writing a song or poem, deep breathing, counting backwards from 100, or meditation/yoga. Sometimes distracting the mind is the best coping skill, such as making art or completing art/hobby kits, listening to or playing fun music, exercising (e.g., use an exercise video on YouTube), praying, reading a fun book, watching a comedian's show online, or doing Sudoku or other "brainteaser" activities.
- **Avoid too much sugar:** If your teen eats lots of foods high in sugar, try to find alternatives. A high sugar diet can cause low energy and worsen symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Practice good sleep hygiene** (see previously specified actions on this topic).
- **Seek professional help:** If your teen is experiencing ongoing mental health challenges, they may require formal treatment services. Call a local clinic to schedule an assessment.



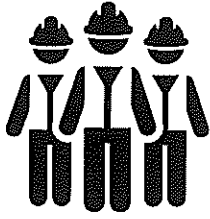
# TIPSHEET: SCHOOL

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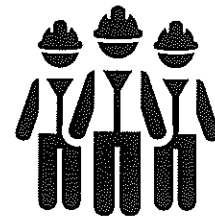
- **Set up homework space:** Help your teen set up a comfortable space for doing homework, free from distractions. This may include taking the TV and their cell phone out of this space.
- **Get organized:** Help your teen get organized with making a list of assignments and due dates.
- Try a method with your teen for getting motivated to do homework. Some ideas are:
  - **Ordering work:** Figure out how to order homework. For example, your teen might prefer tackling their least favorite subjects first or last.
  - **The 25-5 method:** Work hard for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break (for example, using a phone or playing a quick game).
  - **The M&M method:** Do five problems, then get two M&Ms (or something else your teen likes). Five more problems, two more M&Ms, etc.
- **Connect with the school:** Request that the school contact you (the parent) right away if your teen is absent or late. Similarly, ask your teen's teachers how they would like to communicate. For each teacher, find out whether phone calls, emails, or texts are the best way to stay up to date on progress and communicate if problems arise.
- **Show that you value learning:** Express interest by asking your teen what they are learning at school this week.
- **Advocate for accommodation:** If you think your teen may have a learning disability or other disability that is making school challenging, ask their school about doing an evaluation to see if they are eligible for a "504 Plan" or an IEP (Individualized Education Plan).
- **Get involved:** Attend back-to-school nights, other orientation events, or parent-teacher conferences throughout the year.
- **Focus on effort, not product:** Praise your teen when they are giving their best effort, even if it is not immediately translating into results. Help them know that there are some subjects that come easier and others that won't be a natural fit, but they can improve in all subjects when they set their mind to it and put in the work.
- **Set clear expectations:** Share your high expectations and hopes and dreams for your teen, regarding their education.
- **Inspire your teen through stories and traditions:** Share stories of relatives or ancestors that relate to the value of education or overcoming obstacles.
- **Practice good sleep hygiene** (see previously specified actions on this topic).



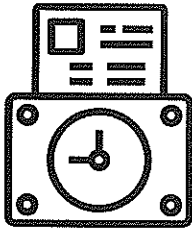


## TIPSHEET: PEERS

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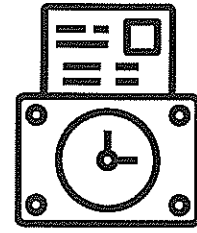


- **Schedule prosocial activities:** Find and schedule one or more activities to fill up your teen's time, where they can be around positive peer influences. This may be through their school, through a community center or local parks, programs at your library, through your church, volunteering, etc.
- **Make a monitoring plan:** Developed an ironclad plan to know where your teen is and what they are doing when out with friends.
- **Encourage refusal skills:** Help your teen come up with what to say if they are being pressured into using drugs or alcohol, breaking the law, or staying out past curfew. This could include using the parent or JPO as an excuse, such as "no, my mom would kill me if she smelled pot on me when I come home," or "I need to get off probation to get back on the track team, and they're making me do these drug tests every week."
- **Avoid criticizing your teen's friends:** If you criticize their friends, your teen may become defensive or want to rebel. Instead, address specific actions or behaviors.
- **Get to know your teen's friends and their parents:** Find a time that you can talk with one of your teen's friends or their parents to get to know them better.
- **Make consequences specific, immediate, and consistent:** If your teen breaks a rule with a friend, name the specific problem behavior and resulting consequence. To be most effective, the consequence should be delivered immediately and every time the problem behavior occurs.
- **Encourage individuality and independence:** Praise your teen for ways in which they are their own person or they do what feels right for them, even if it's against what their friends say.



## TIPSHEET: CURFEW

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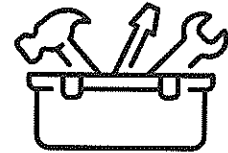


- **Create a clear consequence for breaking curfew:** Tell your teen what the consequence will be and be consistent with applying the consequence. Be firm, fair, and consistent with your rules so your teen knows what to expect.
- **Implement the check-in rule:** No matter how late your teen is out, they must check in with you when they come home. If you are sleeping, they need to wake you up to say they've arrived. This allows you to see that they're safe, check if they are under the influence of substances, and ask how they are doing. Don't ask for the details of their night but say something like: "Glad to see you're home. I love you. Anything you want to talk about?" This also gives your teen an excuse to give to friends that they can't drink or smoke because their parent will find out.
- **Avoid late night heated discussions:** If your teen misses curfew, tell them you were worried but are relieved they're home safely and will talk to them in the morning.

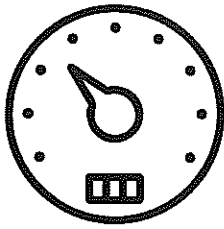


# TIPSHEET: CHORES

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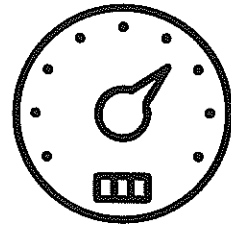


- **Make a chore chart:** Create a chart or another system to display chores and whether they are completed.
- **Break chores down into specific parts:** For example, if you say, 'clean your room,' define all the steps that need to happen within that such as vacuuming, putting clothes away, changing the sheets, etc.
- **Give effective instructions:** When explaining to your teen how to complete a chore, speak directly, calmly, and provide one instruction at a time.
- **Deliver small rewards for completing chores.**
- **Deliver consequences for not completing chores.**
- **Avoid picking up the slack:** Don't do the chore if your teen forgets or refuses. Instead, apply the consequence.



# TIPSHEET: SLEEP HYGIENE

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- **Monitor sleep schedule:** Ask your teen to monitor how many hours they sleep each night for a few days. It is typically recommended that teens sleep ~9 hours/night. If your teen is sleeping less than this, it may be affecting their mood, mental health, or performance in school.
- **Stick to a daily routine:** Help your teen eat, exercise, and sleep at the same time every day. This will help their body set an internal clock and sleep cycle.
- **Get physical:** Find and schedule physical activities to fill up your teen's time (such as joining a sports team, running around the block, exercising with a YouTube video/app, going to the gym, bike riding, etc.). Exercising during the day improves sleep at night. The best time to exercise is late afternoon or early evening. Avoid exercising 1-2 hours before bedtime because that can interfere with sleep.
- **Avoid caffeine:** Avoid consuming caffeinated beverages at least 4 hours before bedtime.
- **Skip the nap:** Naps can interfere with normal sleep cycles.
- **Set a bedtime routine:** Having a bedtime routine cues your teen's body that it's time to sleep. So, establish a set routine that your teen follows every night. For example, have a hot shower, brush teeth, and then listen to calming music or read on the couch until bedtime.
- **Have a snack:** A heavy meal late in the evening can disrupt sleep, while a healthy light snack in the evening can improve sleep. Your teen could try eating cheese and crackers, turkey, or bananas, or drink a warm glass of milk. Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods.
- **Set a media curfew:** After a certain time, turn off the TV, computer, phones, and other screens. Designate an overnight charging area where all family members charge their phone so that your teen isn't using their phone late at night.
- **Set the stage for sleep:** If it's difficult for your teen to have a dark, quiet room to sleep in, get them earplugs and a sleep mask, or something that makes white noise, like a fan.
- **Get out of bed:** If your teen can't fall asleep after 20 to 30 minutes, they should get out of bed and do something boring (e.g., read the manual on how to program a clock radio) or try relaxing (e.g., meditate, listen to calm music, have a warm de-caffeinated drink). When they start to feel sleepy, they should try going back to bed.
- **Don't worry:** Encourage your teen to leave their worries about school, relationships, etc. out of the bedroom. Try scheduling a "worry time" earlier in the evening to deal with worries. If the teen wakes up in the middle of the night worrying, they can try writing down their worries and telling themselves those worries can be addressed in the morning.
- **Seek professional help:** Sometimes sleep problems are a symptom of untreated mental health problems and require more formal treatment services. If you think this might be the case, or if sleep issues don't improve after trying other strategies, call a local clinic to schedule an assessment.