



Skip Forsyth

Texas is a state with extremes. Four seasons in the north panhandle and summer-like weather much of the year in the south valley. Piney woods and lots of rain in the east and desert in far west Texas. Texas has some of the largest cities in the US: Houston #4, San Antonio #7, Dallas #9, Austin #11, Fort Worth #16, and El Paso #19, and over 500 towns

with a population of less than 1,000. In fact, many states have fewer than 500 municipalities in their entire state. Texas is BIG! And with it comes vast socio-economic-cultural diversity in the population. How is it possible to serve the families and teach the children in this great state?

It starts with four core beliefs:

- All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.
- All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.
- Families and school staff should work together as partners.
- The responsibility for building and sustaining partnerships between home, school, and the community rests primarily with school staff and school leadership.

When schools embrace these four core beliefs and purposefully put them into practice, change occurs. Initially the change may be gradual – you gotta get buy-in from the school staff and you gotta prove to the families these values are for real. Persistence pays off, and positive change will result.

Even from infancy, parents possess high hopes for their child. There are the usual concerns for the child's safety and health. Nevertheless, parents and grandparents expect their kiddo to be a high achiever, a special athlete, a person who develops genuine empathy, and a friend among friends. When home and school work in partnership these dreams are more likely to become a reality.

As schools review the achievements during the fall semester and ramp up for the challenges that await in the spring semester, be sure to have conversations with families. What are their aspirations for their child? How can home and school work together to help a child reach his/her potential? What resources or training do parents need to help their child succeed? Regardless of the demographic of your school and community, parents want their children to have a better life than they have. "Upward mobility" is the result of home and school working in partnership to develop safe schools where kids enjoy school, attend consistently, behave appropriately, learn to work with others cooperatively, and graduate with multiple opportunities for employment or post-secondary education. Texas tomorrow, a state with extreme opportunity, depends on us to train our kids successfully today.

Just Because

By: Natalie Stafford

Just because I'm a teenager

I'm not irresponsible
I don't break every single rule
It doesn't mean I'm lazy and unorganized



Just because I'm a teenager

It doesn't mean I'm moody and rude
It doesn't mean I only think about myself
And it doesn't mean
I'm addicted to my phone

Just because I'm a teenager

It doesn't mean I'm constantly worried
about my appearance
It doesn't mean don't understand
complex subjects
Or that I don't have real goals and
aspirations

Just because I'm a teenager

Get to know me for who I am and not
how I am labeled.

Parent-Teacher Conferences: A Tip Sheet for Parents

What should you expect?

- ⇒ **A two-way conversation.** Like all good conversations, parent-teacher conferences are best when both people talk and listen. The conference is a time for you to learn about your child's progress in school. Find out whether your child is meeting school expectations and academic standards. When you tell the teacher about your child's skills, interests, needs, and dreams, the teacher can help your child more.
- ⇒ **Emphasis on learning.** Good parent-teacher conferences focus on how well the child is doing in school. They also talk about how the child can do even better.

Opportunities and challenges.

Just like you, teachers want your child to succeed. You will probably hear positive feedback about your child's progress and areas for improvement. Be ready to ask questions about ways you and the teacher can help your child with some of his or her challenges.



'BE HEARD'

Keep these principles in mind for a great parent-teacher conference:

- B**est intentions assumed
- E**mphasis on learning
- H**ome-school collaboration
- E**xamples and evidence
- A**ctive listening
- R**espect for all
- D**edication to follow up

What should you talk to the teacher about?

- ⇒ **Progress.** Find out how your child is doing by asking questions like: Is my child performing at grade level? How could he or she improve?
- ⇒ **Assignments and assessments.** Ask to see examples of your child's work. Ask how the teacher gives grades.
- ⇒ **Support learning at home.** Ask what you can do at home to help your child learn.
- ⇒ **Support learning at school.** Find out what services are available at the school to help your child. Ask how the teacher will both challenge your child and support your child when he or she needs it.

How should you follow up?

- ⇒ **Make a plan.** Write down the things that you and the teacher will each do to support your child.
- ⇒ **Schedule another time to talk.** Communication should go both ways. Ask how you can contact the teacher. And don't forget to ask how the teacher will contact you too.
- ⇒ **Talk to your child.** The parent-teacher conference is all about your child, so don't forget to include him or her. Share with your child what you learned.

For more resources on family involvement, visit www.hfrp.org

Checklist: Before the conference

- ✓ Schedule a time to meet. If you can't go at the scheduled time, ask the teacher about other times.
- ✓ Review your child's work, grades, and progress reports.
- ✓ Talk with your child about his or her progress in school.
- ✓ Talk with others, family members, after school staff, mentors, etc., about your child's strengths and needs.
- ✓ Make a list of questions to ask during the conference.
- ✓ Think about ways you would like to be involved in your child's learning so that you can discuss them with the teacher.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. You and your child's school have something in common: you both want your child to learn and do well. When parents and teachers talk to each other, each person can share important information about your child's talents and needs. Parent-teacher conferences are a great way to start talking to your child's teacher.

Homework Help for Reluctant Children

How Parents can create a nightly homework ritual that works for everyone.

Author: Heather Miller

It's hard to fault the child who resists doing homework. After all, she has already put in a long day at school, probably been involved in afterschool activities, and, as the late afternoon spills into evening, now faces a pile of assignments. Parents feel it, too — it's no one's favorite time of day.

But despite its bad rap, homework plays an important role in ensuring that students can execute tasks independently. When it's thoughtfully assigned, homework provides deeper engagement with material introduced in class. Homework is a nightly test of grit. Adult life brings its share of tasks that are both compulsory and unenjoyable. Developing the discipline to fulfill our responsibilities, regardless of whether they thrill us, begins in middle childhood.

So how can a parent help the avoidant child embrace the challenge, rather than resist it?

Many parents are under the impression that they shouldn't have anything to do with their children's homework. This comes from schools emphasizing that homework is a child's responsibility, not the parents'. While it is absolutely true that parents should not do their children's homework, there *is* a role for parents — one that's perhaps best described as “homework project manager.” Your presence sends the message that homework is important business, not to be taken lightly.

Ask your child to explain the assignments, then have him put the assignments in the order he'd like to do them. Encourage him to explain his thinking. Doing this helps a child feel in control of the evening's tasks and prompts him to reflect on his work style. Ask your child to think about the supplies he is likely to need and ensure they're at the ready. This “pre-work” work helps a child think through a task, understand it, and prepare to execute it with gusto.



Last but not least, introduce a timer to the evening's proceedings. Challenge your child to estimate how long the first assignment will take. Set the timer with the understanding that the child must work without interruption until the timer goes off. The goal here is to enable the child to solve problems independently, through concentration. This not only builds concentration powers, it builds creativity, critical thinking, resilience, and resourcefulness.

By turning the homework ritual into a series of conversations about what needs to be done, how, and for how long, children feel less “alone” with their nightly work, they relish the company and support of their parent, and they complete the work much more efficiently and at a higher standard than they might otherwise.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/10/homework-help-reluctant-children>

HELPING THE HOMEWORK RESISTERS

1. Have children do their work at a communal table. Stay nearby, to alleviate the loneliness that some kids feel, and to prevent procrastination.
2. Ask your child to unload her backpack and talk through assignments.
3. Help you child make a “Done/To Do” list.
4. Ask your child to put the assignments in the order he'd like to do them. Encourage him to explain his thinking, fostering a sense of control.
5. Use a timer. Challenge your child to estimate how long an assignment will take, and ask if she wants to set the timer for the full amount of time, or less
6. Your role: To monitor, organize, motivate, and praise the homework effort as each piece is done.

Human Trafficking Protect your Children

This article focuses on some techniques you can use to protect your family and gives resources and tips for you to be a hero to a victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a problem that **exists in our backyards**. At its core, it is a threat to us and our loved ones. We need tactics for our families that will have an impact at the time and place they are needed.

Remember, you do not have to be paranoid to be prepared.

The first tactic begins at home. We need to communicate with our kids. My son has not yet started kindergarten, so the conversations I have with him may differ from the one you have with your 16-year-old daughter, but the topics will be similar:

Communication Tip #1: Talk to your kids so that they trust you and are willing to talk with you about anything. If they are being groomed by some predator, you want to know it!

Communication Tip #2: Talk to your kids about what to do if they are threatened. Yell, run, fight. They need to be told that it is OK to behave in this way when they are under attack. One of my son's first words was "no." It's easy to say. I actually had him practice screaming the word "NO!" as loud as he could and putting his hands up to protect him. Yelling is applicable for all ages.

Communication Tip #3: Talk to your kids about what is happening in the world. This goes for any threatening topic and you will have to adjust the type of words you use to be age-appropriate, but hiding your kids from the dangers of this world will not protect them when they are faced with a situation that could alter their lives in a matter of seconds.

Communication Tip #4: If appropriate, use the internet to communicate with your kids. Know what they are looking at, what social media outlets they use and who they are talking to. It is harder these days but communicating with your kids to know who their "friends" are, both in real life and virtually, is important.

Communication Tip #5: Know when your child meets someone new and where they met them. When they come home from school, from the mall, from sports practice, ask them how their day was and if they met anyone new.

These next tactics are for the street. For that time when your child is threatened, and you are not there.

Street Tip #1: Teach your kids their name, address, and phone number. They will need to know how to reach you.

Street Tip #2: Teach your kids to run. And teach them how to run in order to get away from a predator. If your neighborhood has a public place to run to, teach them to run there (library, police station, fire station, etc.). Tell them not to stop running until they get somewhere safe and tell them it is OK to run.

Street Tip #3: Kids can learn how to fight off a predator. It's OK for them to be rude when they are threatened. It's OK for them to hit someone when they are threatened. Teach them how to be a difficult target.

Know the resources you can turn to:

- ✓ National Human Trafficking Resource Center: <http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/>
- ✓ Human Trafficking Task Forces: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/human-trafficking-task-forces>

Human trafficking makes us mad. It makes us sad. It makes us feel helpless. However, we are not helpless. Knowledge and tactics make us strong. The foreign policies and government laws will not protect our children at the time and place they need the protection. That is up to us, let's work together to protect our children.

Written by Mike Sedam,
National Security/Everyday Security



What Kids Can Learn From Volunteering

If volunteering begins at an early age, it can become part of kids' lives—something they might just expect and want to do.

It can teach them:

- ♦ **A sense of responsibility.** By volunteering, kids and teens learn what it means to make and keep a commitment. They learn how to be on time for a job, do their best, and be proud of the results. But they also learn that, ultimately, we're all responsible for the well-being of our communities.
 - ♦ **That one person can make a difference.** A wonderful, empowering message for kids is that they're important enough to have an impact on someone or something else.
- 
- ♦ **The benefit of sacrifice.** By giving up a toy to a less fortunate child, a child learns that sometimes it's good to sacrifice. Cutting back on recreation time to help clean up a beach tells kids that there are important things besides ourselves and our immediate needs.
 - ♦ **Tolerance.** Working in community service can bring kids and teens in touch with people of different backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, ages, education and income levels. They'll learn that even the most diverse individuals can be united by common values.
 - ♦ **Job skills.** Community service can help young people decide on their future careers. Are they interested in the medical field? Hospitals and clinics often have teenage volunteer programs. Do they love politics? Kids can work on the real campaigns of local political candidates. Learning to work as a team member, taking on leadership roles, setting project goals—these are all skills that can be gained by volunteering and will serve kids well in any future career.
 - ♦ **How to fill idle time wisely.** If kids aren't involved in traditional after-school activities, community service can be a wonderful alternative.

Source: www.kidshealth.org

Signs You're Overindulging Your Child

Our self-absorbed society has told parents to help their kids feel good about themselves, that it's the parents' duty to make their children happy. But underneath it all, kids don't need parents who make them happy. They need parents who will make them capable.

When parents give children too much stuff that costs money, do things for children that they can do for themselves, do not expect children to do chores, do not have good rules and let children run the family, parents are **overindulging**.

Here are some other signs of overindulgence.

1. **Overindulging** children is giving them things or experiences that are not appropriate for their age or their interests. For example:
 1. Allowing a five-year-old to dress like a pop star
 2. Allowing a twelve-year-old to watch an R-rated movie
 3. Removing curfew from a sixteen-year-old with a new driver's license
2. **Overindulgence** is giving things to meet the adult's needs, not the child's. For example:
 1. A mom buying her daughter the trendiest clothes, because mom believes it's a reflection on her own style
 2. A dad giving his son the "stand out" wheels at sixteen, so dad's friends -- as well as his son's friends -- will think he's "the man"
 3. A parent giving his or her children the best of the best in order to make the parent look successful
3. **Overindulgence** is giving too much and expecting too little. As pointed out earlier, doing and having too much too soon prevents children from maturing and reaching their full potential. For example:
 1. Not requiring your four-year-old to make requests using "please," or not requiring "thank you" from your five-year-old for simple kindnesses
 2. Giving unlimited computer time to your teen without requiring duties to be performed first
 3. Funding your teenager's weekends -- giving him or her money for gas, movies, or other entertainment -- instead of expecting the teen to earn his or her own spending money
4. **Overindulgence** is neglecting to teach your children the life skills they need to survive in the "real" world beyond your home. For example:
 1. Tying the shoes and dressing four-year-olds who are perfectly capable of dressing themselves
 2. Not expecting teens to prepare their own lunch during the summer months
 3. Doing the laundry for teenagers who are more than capable and need to learn to do it for themselves

Teach your children the difference between a need and a want, and then make them work for their wants. For instance, rather than buying that new video game for your children, give them two options: Tell them they can place it on a wish list for a birthday or Christmas present, or they can do extra duties to earn the money to buy it themselves. If your children are willing to work for their "heart's desire," they'll take better care of it, be more grateful for it, and think long and hard before turning a "want" into a "need" in the future.

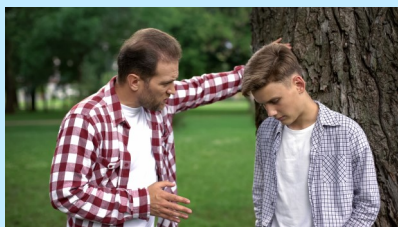
Excerpts from article, "Signs You're Overindulging Your Child," written by Jill Rigby

Teen Discipline

As your child turns into a teenager, your parenting role is likely to shift. You may find yourself becoming more of a guide, rather than an enforcer. That's not to say your child won't need you to intervene when there are safety issues or that your teen won't need consequences. But, by now, it's OK to let your child make some choices on his own, even when you think it's a bad choice.

Teens like to test the limits of their independence, so don't be surprised when your teen argues when you say no or when she goes behind your back to do as she pleases. There's often a tug-of-war between parents and teens. Your child may demand your assistance one minute and claim she doesn't need you the next. Adolescence can be a tumultuous time for teens as they change physically, emotionally, and socially. It's normal for teens to act responsible and almost adult-like in some areas of their lives, while still holding onto their child-like ways in other areas.

As friends and romantic relationships grow increasingly important, your teen will want to spend more time with his peers. That means less interest in family time. Your teen will also want more privacy. She may want to keep her social media conversations private and she may spend a lot more time in her room with the door closed.



Common Challenges

By now, you only have a few years left to prepare your teen for the real world. And it can be tricky to strike a balance that gives your child enough freedom, while still giving him plenty of guidance. Most teens want more freedom than they can handle. They may insist they need a later curfew, or they may try to debate when you've said no about a party.

Talking back is common as your teen will go through phases where he insists he knows everything and you know nothing about what it's like to be a teenager.

Discipline Strategies That Work: Just because your teen has outgrown time-out doesn't mean you can't instill effective consequences. But it's important to find consequences that will teach life lessons.

Here are some of the most effective consequences for teens:

- **Remove electronics**—Restricting your teen's phone/electronic privileges can be an effective consequence. Usually, 24 hours is long enough to send a clear message to your teen.
- **Take away time with friends**—If your teen's misbehavior involves friends, take away her right to see her pals for a while. Ground her for a few days or cancel her special weekend plans.

- **Tighten the rules**—If your teen violates the rules, he may be showing you he can't handle the freedom you're giving him. Tighten the rules by giving him an earlier curfew or by reducing the amount of time he spends using his electronics.
- **Have your teen perform an act of restitution**—If your teenager's behavior hurts someone else, create a plan to make amends. Fixing something he broke or doing an extra chore for someone may help repair the relationship and remind him to accept responsibility for his behavior.
- **Allow your teen to face natural consequences**—Natural consequences can be the best teachers in certain situations. But it's important to make sure the natural consequences will really teach your teen a life lesson. If so, back off and let your teen face the consequences for his choices.
- **Provide logical consequences**—If your teen breaks something, make him pay to fix it. Or, if he is irresponsible with the car, take away his driving privileges. Create consequences that are directly tied to the poor choices your teen made.
- **Assign extra responsibilities**—Take away your teen's privileges until he completes extra chores or performs certain tasks. When he shows you he can be responsible, he can earn his privileges back. **Preventing Future Problems:** Behave like an overprotective helicopter parent and your teenager won't learn how to make healthy decisions. If you're too permissive, however, he won't gain the skills he needs to become a responsible adult.

Here are the top strategies for preventing behavior problems in teenagers:

- **Avoid power struggles**—When your teen says, "That's not fair!" or "I'll do it later," resist the temptation to argue. Set a firm limit and follow through with a consequence. But don't get sucked into a heated power struggle.
- **Make your expectations clear**—Before you drop your teen off at the movies or you let her walk to the skate park alone, make your expectations clear. Tell her what you want her to do if she encounters a problem and what time you expect her to be home.
- **Let your teen earn privileges**—Whether your teen wants expensive basketball sneakers, or he asks to have a later bedtime, make it clear that privileges must be earned. If your teen's behavior doesn't warrant privileges, don't allow him to have them.
- **Create a behavior contract**—When you give your teen a new privilege, like a smartphone or a later curfew, create a behavior contract. Review the rules and outline the consequences for breaking the rules. Make him sign the contract before he gets the privilege.
- **Be a good role model**—Your teen learns more by watching what you do, rather than hearing what you say. So make sure you're being a good role model in all areas of your teen's life.
- **Spend quality time together**—Give your teen positive attention to build a solid foundation for your relationship.
- **Expect your teen to be responsible**—Your teen will likely live up to your expectations, as long as those expectations are reasonable. So make it clear that you expect her to do well in school or that you expect her to get her chores done

(continued on next page)

Communication Tips: Communicating with your teen may feel like an uphill battle sometimes. But, it's important to keep trying. Here are some of the most effective ways to talk to your teen:

- **Communicate regularly**—Healthy communication is at the heart of any good relationship. When your teen knows she can talk to you, she'll be more likely to seek your guidance.
- **Talk during an activity**—Insisting your teen sit down and talk to you face-to-face about serious subjects may cause your teen to shut down. You might find your teen is more willing to talk when you're doing an activity together, such as playing catch or even riding in the car.
- **Don't insist your teen talk to you**—It's healthy for your teen to gain some independence so don't insist that he tell you everything. Help him identify several other healthy adults she could always turn to for advice. An aunt, grandmother, coach, teacher, or neighbor might be the types of people your child feels comfortable talking to about certain subjects.
- **Problem-solve together**—Rather than tell your teen how to do things better, invite her to problem-solve with you. Ask questions like, "What could you do that would help you remember to do your chores?"
- **Step into your teen's world**—Your teen may communicate more freely over social media or through text message. So be willing to step into your teen's world and talk to her in whatever form she seems most comfortable opening up in.

Excerpt from article, "Teen Discipline: Strategies and Challenges", written by Amy Morin, LCSW



Mark your Calendar

DECEMBER 12-14
2019
Statewide Parental Involvement Conference

San Marcos Embassy Suites & Conference Center
1001 E. McCarty Ln
San Marcos, TX 78666
512.392.6450

When booking a room go to tinyurl.com/y2nl8kg and use group code **PIC**

ONLINE REGISTRATION

available at:

<http://www.implanners.com/parents/register.php>

or download and complete the registration form, then fax to (888) 267-7913—or email to implanners@sbcglobal.net.

If you're interested in attending, contact the school's principal or parent and family engagement liaison.

The teenage years have a lot in common with the terrible twos. During both stages our kids are doing exciting new things, but they're also pushing boundaries (and buttons) and throwing tantrums. The major developmental task facing both age groups is also the same: kids must pull away from parents and begin to assert their own independence. No wonder they sometimes act as if they think they're the center of the universe.

This makes for complicated parenting, especially because teens are beginning to make decisions about things that have real consequence, like school and friends and driving, not to speak of substance use and sex. But they aren't good at regulating their emotions yet, so teens are prone to taking risks and making impulsive decisions.

This means that having a healthy and trusting parent-child relationship during the teenage years is more important than ever. Staying close isn't easy, though. Teens often aren't very gracious when they are rejecting what they perceive to be parental interference. While they're an open book to their friends, who they talk to constantly via text messages and social media, they might become mute when asked by mom how their day went. A request that seemed reasonable to dad may be received as a grievous outrage.

If this sounds familiar, take a deep breath and remind yourself that your child is going through his terrible teens. It is a phase that will pass, and your job as parent is still vitally important, only the role may have changed slightly.

<https://childmind.org/article/tips-communicating-with-teen/>



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The Parent and Family Engagement Connection
Home & School
"Together We Can Make a Difference"

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German and Korean.



EDITOR
Terri Stafford, Coordinator
Parent and Family Engagement
Statewide Initiative
t1pfe@esc16.net



ADMINISTRATION
Ray Cogburn, Executive Director
Region 16 Education Service Center
5800 Bell Street - Amarillo, Texas 79109
Phone: (806) 677-5000 Fax: (806) 677-5167
www.esc16.net



Cory Green, Associate Commissioner
Department of Contracts,
Grants and Financial Administration
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue - Austin, Texas 78701
Phone: (512) 463-9734
www.tea.texas.gov