



The Catholic Youth Community of St. John Neumann

Dear Parents and Guardians of the Teens of St. John Neumann,

Do you ever wonder if the relationship you are building with your teenager will last the test of time? As you communicate with your teen, how much of your interaction is focused on pushing them to get things done, driving them to some practice, games, school events, reminding them of their responsibilities, etc. versus how much time are you spending building the relationship?

You know the old saying, “No one wishes on their deathbed that they spent more time in the office.” All of us would wish, I’m sure, that we could spend more time with family and friends and just be present with each other instead of rushing out the door to do “stuff.” I know that your relationship with your teen can quickly become somewhat mechanical because there are a lot of things that have to get done. Every day, you have to get your kids up and make sure they’re fed and clothed before they walk out the door. They have to get to school - and then after school maybe to practice or to work, or to some event. And when you all get home at night, there’s cleaning up and dinner and homework – there’s just a lot... After a long day, you collapse, sleep, and do it all over again. Believe me when I tell you this – I am always praying for you parents!

And, amid all the chaos, what gets crowded out is the relationship. We’re all often in the same space and all trying to move in some direction forward, but building deep, meaningful relationships that will last a lifetime can just be hard. We are all created to be in relationships, first in a relationship with God, and second in relationships with those around us. We also know that God created the family to be the primary place where we experience relationships and live out the purpose of honoring Him in the world.

It’s critical for you to build healthy relationships in your homes, so do what you can as a parent to make sure you have a real relationship with your kids as they grow older. They need you more – even if they don’t act like it! They do! They are watching and listening!

Whenever you are on a plane, you have to sit through the safety talk and demonstration. The flight attendant says, "In case of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from the compartment above you. Pull the mask towards you to start the flow of oxygen. Place it over your nose and mouth, securing it with the elastic band. **Ensure your own mask is secure before assisting others, such as children or those who may need help.** Breathe normally..." We all know the masks are just there to muffle the screams, right? LOL Sorry... that's an old David Letterman joke!

This seems crazy not to help your children FIRST in an emergency... but you can't help your kids until you help yourself. The best thing you can do for yourself is be strong in your own faith! The strength you receive from our Lord will support you as you parent! There are many groups and events here at St. John Neumann that can help you deepen your faith. A big opportunity is happening next week – our parish's Lenten Mission. I hope you can attend with your family!

This week, take a look at the **OPM resource** that I have provided on the next few pages. Walk away from the devices, make time for your teens on their time, share about what God is doing in your life, and watch your relationships with them grow! I am rooting for you! Be encouraged!

Peace,

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St. John Neumann Church is proud to present...

THE PRESENCE OF *God*

February 19-21

Our Parish Mission is led by the Dominican Friars
and Alumni of the Angelicum in Rome.

They will share with us the wisdom and insights
of St. Thomas Aquinas on how to recognize and
respond to the Presence of God in our daily lives!



Tips for Building Healthy Relationships with Your Teens!



1) Be honest and open.

Talk to your teens about dating and sexuality. The research shows that the more open and honest you are with your child the more communication there will be about dating and sexuality. This is very important because it has been found that a good predictor of less adolescent sex is directly related to how much parents and teens talk openly about sex.

Richer discussions about dating and sexuality are one mechanism by which a better quality parent-teen relationship influences adolescent choices to delay sexual activity. 'Richer discussions' means including messages about your attitudes and values about sexuality, advice-giving, and warnings about potentially negative consequences of teenage sexual activity.

2) Be authoritative, not authoritarian in your parenting style.

Show an authoritative (not authoritarian) parenting style, which involves a combination of warmth and firmness. Set high standards and have high expectations for your teens regarding their behavior, and enforce these standards with consistent discipline.

3) Think "harm reduction," not zero tolerance.

When it comes to teens' experimentation with adult privileges (substance use, sex, romance, etc.) it is unrealistic to assume that they will not experiment. Parents who try and enforce absolutes are often in conflict with their teens and most often are kept in the dark about their activities.

The alternative is to discuss choices and the pros and cons of these new-found opportunities in a non-threatening manner and obtain their understanding in advance of consequences for breach of trust. Convey to them that you want them to be safe which implies that they must take personal responsibility for their actions, use their own judgment, and make their own choices.



"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it."

—Abraham Lincoln

4) Don't believe everything you read or hear.

The media would have us believe that drug use, heavy drinking, violence, and underage sex, are occurring at rates far greater than they actually are.

These misconceptions can lead to a sense of dread as your child approaches the teen years, and may influence how you react to your child's behavior and actions. This is especially true if you automatically assume that they will become involved in high-risk behavior.

Make sure to get the facts and examine the misconceptions you may have about your teen's behavior and actions before you jump to any conclusions.



5) Monitor and supervise your teen's activities with parental sensitivity.

Parental supervision is recognized as a key factor that can moderate adolescent problem behavior. Monitoring must be balanced with parental sensitivity so as not to become over-intrusive and unnecessarily invade your teen's privacy.

You can monitor your child's behavior simply by being present (before and after they go out, for example) and asking a few simple questions in a neutral (non-accusatory) tone. Too much supervision and monitoring can lead to greater teen problem behavior because teens may then rebel and act out to exercise their right to some freedom from parental constraints.

6) Accentuate the Positive.

Try to initiate positive communication with your teenager whenever the opportunity arises. If you are experiencing conflict with your teen over rules, chores, school, peers, etc. talk to them about it, but also attempt to have positive conversations with

your teen about other things. Because there is conflict does not mean that every interaction has to be negative. Actively attempt to build in genuine positive interactions throughout the day or week so that your teen learns that you are unhappy with their behavior and not with them as a person.

7) Encourage flexibility in gender roles and behavior.

Teens are under considerable pressure to conform to their peers' (and sometimes family's) expectations as to what boys and girls "should and should not" do. Gender-role rigidity is very high in early to mid-adolescence, with boys (in particular) having a heightened sense of the importance of being "masculine."

Speak to them about these pressures and their views, and encourage them to recognize how some of their choices (of friends, sports, etc.) may be misdirected by fears of being ridiculed. Overly aggressive and controlling behavior in teens are often signs of their strict adherence to society's expectations, which can sometimes be inadvertently communicated by parents ("be a man," "tough it out"). Discuss ways to respond to teasing in a lighthearted manner.





8) Encourage your teen to be involved in extracurricular activities.

Studies have shown that greater extracurricular involvement at school or in the community can have a positive influence on academic achievement, and pro-social behaviors such as voting and volunteering in young adulthood.

Girls drop out of sports and other physical activities at an alarming rate when they get to high school because they are pressured into believing that being athletic is not feminine. Speak with them about these pressures and why it is important to make your own decisions.

9) Address any abusive or inappropriate language with a firm and clear message.

Today it has become acceptable in teen culture to swear and verbally abuse others like no other previous generation has! While parents can't totally prevent abusive language outside their homes (in music, television, and other media), teens appreciate knowing the limits.

Language is a powerful means by which teens control the actions of others, including dating partners, parents, and peers. Be especially vigilant for expressions that put down others, no matter

how "innocent" or "joking" they may seem, and point out what these expressions really communicate.

10) Be an active participant (to a point) in your teen's life.

Know your teen's interests. If they like hockey, take them to a hockey game if you can. If they play hockey, watch them play - in a non-critical way. If they like opera, ballet, or whatever their interest is, plan a day when you can be together to do something special.

Or if a movie comes on television that you both like - watch it together. Not a lot of words need to be spoken. It is being together that counts!

I think teens
push
boundaries
because
their lives
are so
confusing
that they
want to
know what
will hold fast.
The only way
to find out is
to push!