

Tips for Teen Transitions

1. **Identify significant teen passages.**
2. **Communicate about or recognize and celebrate these passages.**
3. **Encourage your teen to explore healthy growth opportunities.**

Identify significant teen passages.

Often, significant teen passages are “the first time” the teen does or acquires something, such as the first boyfriend or girlfriend, the first job, or the first time driving. Other key passages take place over time, such as puberty or taking more responsibility for younger siblings. Figure out which transitions are important to *your* teen – what “counts” for one teen may not for another teen.

- Be tuned in to the things that are important to him in his daily life.
- Communicate regularly. Stay aware of how your teen spends her days so you can notice when there are changes.
- Ask your teen how he feels about the obvious life passages.
- Note how your teen discusses transitions with friends.
- Talk about key transitions in your own teen life to start a conversation, but be aware that what was significant to you may not matter to your child.
- Watch for signs of happiness, joy, stress, anxiety, or depression surrounding changes in your teen’s life.

Communicate about and recognize or celebrate important life events.

Talking with your teen about the significant steps along the path to adulthood is an important way to send the message “I love you, I care about you, and I hear you!” Teens look for signals that they are making suitable progress toward becoming adults. Teens care very much what you think about them, even if they don’t always show it.

- Recognize and celebrate a transition in a variety of forms, including a small gift, an additional privilege, or even special words or deeds.
- Celebrate with a party in appropriate cases, such as graduation from high school, but parties should not be the only way that you celebrate adolescent passages.
- Be careful not to minimize, judge, or correct an insight or revelation noted by your teen. For example, your teen’s first paycheck may signify independence and achievement. Your warning to save it for college may miss an opportunity to celebrate that passage.

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What's most important is that you demonstrate your awareness of key events in your child's life and that you show appreciation for his or her growth.

Encourage your teen to explore healthy growth opportunities.

- Point your teen toward structured, goal-oriented activities where recognition and appreciation are built in.
- Help your teen identify extracurricular opportunities that promote development through the progression of skills or contributions. Some organizations such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, summer camps, and service-learning clubs have ladders as part of their structure.
- Encourage your teens to invest time and effort in clubs or activities so they will reap the rewards that come with sustained commitment, such as assuming officer or leadership positions. Some sports teams also reward commitment and achievement through awards and letters.