

MIND MATTERS: PARENTS PROMOTING ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

The development of positive behaviors and attitudes can lead to happier youth and also can protect adolescents from other problem behaviors, school difficulties and mental health disorders. What can parents do to help adolescents develop positive behaviors and attitudes that enhance their overall well-being?

- Connect and talk to your adolescent each day. Try these conversation starters:

Tell me something you did to help someone at home or school today (this week).

Tell me something you wish you could do that you have been trying to do.

Tell me something you have been working on this week.

Tell me about a decision you are trying to make or a decision you have made recently.

- Get involved in your adolescent's school experiences. Involvement can vary from simply showing interest in school assignments or projects to attending school events or even volunteering for school committees.
- Set rules, communicate your expectations, and monitor your youth's activities.
- Teach your adolescent how to make good choices by allowing them to actually *make* choices.
- Model effective problem solving skills ("trouble shoot" available choices and possible outcomes of each).
- Model effective coping skills (engage in pleasant activities, use humor, talk to people, engage in physical activities, use relaxation).
- Avoid "leaving" your adolescent with a negative or hurtful interaction or comment from you. Make it a habit to end conversations with positive statements from you.
- Expose your adolescent to activities or groups that promote empathy, compassion and justice.
- Foster self-efficacy, believe in your adolescent, listen to their ideas, and find value in their actions. Feelings of competency promote well-being and will protect adolescents from risky behaviors.
- Foster a belief in the future – help your adolescent set and work toward short and long term goals.
- Celebrate efforts and accomplishments of all family members.
- Take time for family activities – encourage physical activity, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.
- Maintain positive family communication habits. Provide opportunities, such as regular meal times, for family members to share concerns and triumphs.

