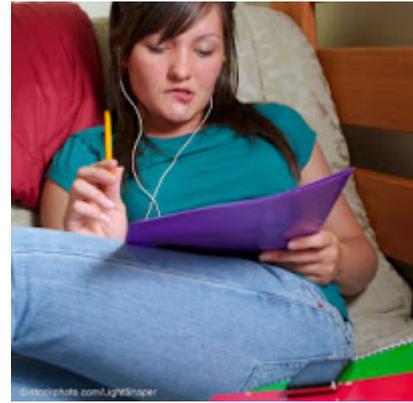


Avoiding Homework Battles with Teens

(www.empoweringparents.com)



Most moms and dads find it difficult to tolerate an adolescent that they feel isn't trying. And unfortunately, often times the parents' attempt to motivate the teen actually backfires. In other words, the teen still refuses to do homework, but now parent-child conflict enters the picture; her refusal to do homework is often an indirect way of expressing anger. So how can parents get their teenager to be responsible for homework - but at the same time - avoid a *knock-down drag-out* fight?

Here are some tips for motivating your teen to do homework without the power struggles:

1. After an elapsed time, encourage your adolescent to do something she enjoys. Having her do something in which she excels will help bolster the confidence she needs to try school challenges.
2. Arrange for a peer study group. Encourage your teenager to form a study group of friends or neighbourhood peers. Research shows that when teens study together, it can improve retention. It makes learning active rather than passive and encourages communication. However, moms and dads should be aware of what is happening within the study group; study groups need to be monitored.
3. Before trying any remedies, get a second opinion. If your adolescent's teachers feel she's doing pretty well (and if they have the test scores to prove it), it is worth listening.
4. Bring their backpack to them. This may seem ridiculous to you, but it can work. Adolescents are lazy by nature. It can be all the more difficult to get them to work if what they need is downstairs and they are comfortable on the couch upstairs. Sometimes, adolescents will forget about work, simply because it is not in sight.
5. Consider whether your underachiever has hit a downward spiral because he's disorganized or just doesn't know how to cope with a busy schedule with several subjects to work on every night.
6. Discuss consequences. If they are planning on going out with friends, don't nag them to get the homework done before hand, but let them know that if they fail any assignments, they will not hang with friends outside of school for a week. The same applies if they want to do something like go skateboarding or something like that. Allow them to go, but with conditions.
7. Don't argue or bargain. Teenagers will try to bargain their way out of homework. If they are able to get out of it once, they will keep trying. Let your teenager know that there is no room for negotiation. Don't let procrastination turn into a bad habit.
8. Find a homework tutor. Many moms and dads feel frustrated when they can't help their teenager with homework.
9. Help your teenager prioritize assignments. In high school, there are many long projects and papers rather than short worksheet assignments. This can be overwhelming, especially if your teenager procrastinates. To avoid this, help him prioritize assignments based on due date, length and the percentage of the final grade.
10. If grades are failing or falling, take away screen time so your teenager can focus and have more time to concentrate on his work.
11. If you feel yourself getting reactive or frustrated, take a break from helping your teenager with

homework. Your blood pressure on the rise is a no-win for everyone. Take 10 minutes to calm down, and let your teenager do the same if you feel a storm brewing.

12. If your adolescent is being lazy, ask him to get up and do something that he will enjoy for a few minutes. Once he is off his butt, it might become much easier to get him to go and get his homework.

13. If your school system provides an online grade book, take advantage of it. Check up regularly, (at least twice a week), and notice when grades rise and fall, as well as missing assignments. Work with your adolescent to come up with plans to raise grades and do well on tests.

14. Make it the rule that weekend activities don't happen until work is completed. Homework comes first. The weekend doesn't begin until homework is done.

15. Make sure that homework is done in a public area of your house.

16. Make them start. This seems obvious, but it is not as simple as you may think. Instead of telling your teen to "go start your homework," bring them to the computer or their work space and sit down next to them. Don't give up and walk away. Just sit there next to them and violate their personal space until they open their notebook or laptop and start their work. Watch to make sure that really start. Sometimes, it is that simple push that they need. Once they are on a roll, you can walk away and let them continue.

17. Monitor their computer history. If they are working on a computer, watch to make sure that they don't stray. You can also set parental controls and restrictions on their internet access.

18. Progress may be exceedingly slow, but express pleasure in anything. An improvement from a C to a C+ is a good start. A few forays into grades of B- and above will prove to the underachiever that she is capable of better work, and nothing terrible will happen if she does it.

19. Provide a good atmosphere for studying. It's hard to study if someone is in the next room watching television. Set a good example and read a book of your own while your teenager is studying. The more you minimize distractions, the easier it will be for her to finish homework quickly and accurately.

20. Relate assignments to the bigger picture. You've probably heard the questions: "Why do I have to do this?" or "When am I ever going to use this?" Explain how different assignments are applicable to real life and how they are used by people in various careers.

21. Remember that homework is not top priority. To adolescents, the most important things are friends and hobbies. Homework is a by-product of school, and nobody likes it. Undoubtedly, your adolescent will have peers that completely blow off all of their work, and this can be a negative influence. Show them that they can be cool and have good grades, not one or the other. Do this by telling them stories about when you were a child, tests that you failed and homework that you did not turn in. Don't make it seem like you are encouraging not turning in the work, but your adolescent will look at you differently when he knows that you were just like him at his age.

22. Remember what worked in the past. Think about a time when your teenager has gotten homework done well and with no arguments. What was different? What made it work that time? Ask your teenager about it and believe what she says. See what works and motivates her instead of what motivates you.

23. Responsible grown-ups were not necessarily responsible adolescents. Remember those days when you were going through the same thing? Allow your adolescent to learn from his failure, which is an excellent motivator. Just keep track of his progress to make sure that he does not fail too much.

24. In some case, you will want to see to it that homework is done at the same time each night.

25. Since underachievers generally have low self-esteem, offering emotional support helps immensely. But ultimately, the underachiever has to decide to do it for herself. Show acceptance and affection for your teen and make certain that she knows you love her no matter what her academic standing.

26. Sometimes, one of the best ways to help an underachiever is to not get directly involved in

homework. Find out how much time she should be spending on homework every night and then require that that amount of time be invested. Make sure she touches base with you to show that she made an effort to do her work. Then check to see that the work makes it into the backpack, because doing the work but not taking it to school is another form of self-sabotage for the underachiever.

27. Try to understand why your adolescent does not want to work. There are many reasons why adolescents may not want to do their homework. Are they absorbed in some other task? Are they planning on going out with friends? Or maybe they're just obsessed with playing a video game. Whatever it is, knowing the cause is the best way to counter.

28. Use positive guidance techniques. Adolescents can feel loved "conditionally," which means that they only think you approve of them when they do a good job. This can lead to depression and bitterness. Try to be as positive as possible. If your adolescent comes up to you and tells you that he failed a test, be understanding. It took a lot of courage for him to work up the nerve to tell you this, and the cooler you are with it, the more likely he is to come and talk with you on a regular basis.

29. When you start over-focusing on your teenager's work, pause and think about your own goals. What are your life goals and what "homework" do you need to get done in order to achieve those goals? Model your own persistence and perseverance to your teenager.

30. When your adolescent simply dislikes the subject, confide in her that you will do it for her if she brings it out. Have her bring it to a couch where the two of you can sit together and work. Judge the scope of your adolescent's understanding, and then sort of trick her into doing the work herself. Tell her you have to use the restroom, and just walk away. Before you go, ask her to do two or more on her own.

If none of the tips above help, consult a professional. Underachievement often has deep psychological roots, and if you're not making headway with your adolescent, you would be wise to contact someone who can help discover what's bothering her.