

Parents TOGETHER

A Newsletter for Greenwich Parents of Adolescents ©
www.parentstogetherct.org

Teen Rebellion How Do You Deal With It?

THE MAIN TASK of an adolescent in our culture is to become psychologically emancipated from his or her parents. The teenager needs to cast aside the dependent relationship of childhood before he can develop a new *adult* relationship with his parents. The adolescent gradually separates himself from his parents while gaining control of his own adult life. This process is characterized by a certain amount of intermittent normal rebellion, defiance, discontent, turmoil, restlessness, and ambivalence. Emotions usually run high and mood swings are common. Even teenagers who have a mild transition into adolescence hurt their parents' feelings repeatedly with clear messages of, "Leave me alone," and "I don't need you."

This stage usually starts between ages 12 and 14. Normally, rebellion continues for approximately two years but, not uncommonly, it can continue for four to six years and may be accentuated or prolonged under certain circumstances, for example if the teen is doing poorly in school; if the teen is unsure and ambivalent of his or her adult role; if the teen has a difficult temperament (for instance a child who displayed intense negativism during the preschool period) or if the teen's parents have unusually high standards or expectations for him. Defiance may become intense should the parent try to eliminate any signs of normal rebellion and regain "control" over the teenager.

Practical Approaches to Living with an Adolescent

Clarify the house rules and consequences

You have the right and responsibility to make rules regarding your house and possessions, and rules in writing cut down on misunderstandings. A teenager's preferences can be tolerated within his own room but they need not be imposed on the rest of the house. You can say no to loud music, or incoming phone calls after a certain hour at night; you can say no to a TV or computer in his bedroom. While it's always better to make your teen's friends feel welcome in your home, you should clarify the ground rules regarding parties and large group gatherings. Your teen can take care of cleaning his own room and doing his laundry, and you can insist on him wearing clean clothes and having an acceptable level of physical hygiene. You can decide whether or not you are willing to lend him your possessions, like the car. If he does borrow the car he needs to ask you in advance, tell you where he is going and when he will be back. Under no circumstances may he drive if he has been drinking alcohol.

Reasonable consequences for breaking house rules include loss of telephone, computer and TV time, and car privileges. Time out is not useful in this age group and physical punishment can lead to a serious breakdown in your relationship. If your teen breaks something, he should be responsible for getting it

continued on page 2

To our readers

Welcome back! We hope your school year is off to a good start. This is the first newsletter of the 2007 - 2008 calendar; look for others in December, February and May. Please contact your school's delegate (see page 7) if you have any questions about the newsletter or our upcoming programs.

Fall Programs

- September 17:** "Eat Fit, Be Fit"
- October 1:** "Reading Aloud" **7:30 PM at Cos Cob School**
- October 9:** "What You Don't Know Can Keep You Out of College" **7:30 PM at Arcadia Coffee**
- October 15:** "The Balanced Mom - Raising your Kids Without Losing Yourself"
- November 5:** "Stress and Kids of Today"
Location TBA

See back page for more details.

continued from page 1

repaired, or work for you until his debt is paid off. If he makes a mess, he needs to clean it up in a timely fashion. If he is doing poorly in school, you can limit privileges. If he ignores his curfew and neglects to call you to tell you that he is going to be home late, you can make his curfew earlier and/or ground him for a few days, depending on the severity of the situation.

Use family conferences for negotiating house rules

Some families find it helpful to have a brief meeting after dinner once a week. At this time your teen can ask for changes in house rules or bring up family issues that are causing problems. As a parent you can use this time to bring up issues of your own for example, the demand to drive your teen to many places, at all hours and the need for her help in arranging carpools. The family unit often functions better if the decision-making is democratic. The object of negotiation should be that both parties feel that they win. The atmosphere can be one of "We have a problem but nobody is at fault. How can we best solve it?"

Use "I" messages for rudeness

We want our teens to express their anger verbally not physically and to challenge our opinions in a logical way. You can expect him to present his case with passion and

he may be unreasonable. We need to listen. While some talking back is normal, you need not accept disrespectful remarks such as being called a "jerk". Mean remarks should be addressed and you can respond with a comment such as, "It's really hurtful to me when you put me down or you don't answer my questions." Say it

Teenagers need to have plenty of opportunity to learn from their own mistakes before they leave home...

calmly and if your adolescent continues to be unpleasant, leave the room. Don't get into a shouting

match – that type of response is not adaptable to outside relationships. Set a good example of the ability to express disapproval without insult or attack. If angry or rude remarks come up in the context of a complaint about something, try to overlook the rudeness and directly engage your teen in a discussion of the issue, not his tone. When you can focus on objective problem solving and keep an objective tone of voice, your teen may be able to gain control over his emotions and remarks.

What you are trying to teach is that everyone has the right to disagree and even to express anger. While some volatility is normal, screaming and rude behavior are not acceptable. If your teen is angry, he can explain what he is angry about, but in a calm voice. Relatives, family friends and other visitors are also to be treated with respect. Your modeling politeness, constructive disagreement, and the ability to apologize sets a good example.

Give space to a teen who is in a bad mood

Generally, when your teenager is in a bad mood, she won't talk about it with you and, at this time, it is advisable to give her privacy and plenty of space. Should she wish to discuss a problem with anybody, it will be with a close friend. When she is ready, she may well share the reason for her concern with you and apologize for her moodiness.

Let society's rules and consequences help in teaching responsibility outside the home

Your teenager must learn from trial and error. As he goes through the rebellious phase and starts to experiment, he should learn to take responsibility for his decisions and actions. As a parent you hope that your teen will rely on self-discipline, positive peer pressure, and logical consequences – lessons taught and learned in childhood. If your teen has poor work habits, he will lose his job; if he selects an excessively violent movie to watch, he may have nightmares. If he has a poor choice in friends, he may find that he gets into trouble. If he doesn't try hard at sports practice, he will get pressure from teammates and the coach to do better. If he misspends his allowance or earnings, he will run out of money, and if he has a negative attitude or is moody, he will lose friends.

Part of your role as a parent is to support the rules imposed by the community and the school. City curfew laws and driving restrictions will help to control late hours. The requirement for punctual school attendance will influence when your teen goes to bed at night. If she has trouble getting up in the morning, buy her

an alarm clock. School grades and class participation will usually hold your teen accountable for school performance.

If, by chance, your teen asks you for advice in a problem area, try to cover the pros and con in a brief and impartial way. Ask some questions to help her think about the main risks. Then wrap up your remarks with a question such as, "What do you think is best?" Teenagers need to have plenty of opportunity to learn from their own mistakes before they leave home and have to solve problems on their own, without a support system.

Avoid criticism about no-win topics

Overly negative parent-adolescent relationships may be caused by excessive criticism and pressure to change behavior. Some objectionable behavior reflects conformity with the current preferences of the youngster's peer group. Since peer group immersion is one of the essential stages of adolescent development, dressing, talking, and acting

different from adults help your child feel independent from you. So, "Back off", as

your teenager would say.

Although you might comment on your teen's appearance, try not to attack her choice of clothing, hair style or makeup; her recreational interests like music, dance steps or television shows; her hobbies, or her beliefs, religion, and philosophy. Allowing your teen to rebel in these areas

may prevent testing in major areas like experimentation with drugs, truancy, or stealing. Intervene and try to change behavior only if it is harmful, illegal or infringes on your rights. Another error is to criticize your teen's mood, attitude or facial expression. A negative or lazy attitude can only be changed through good example and praise of good behavior. The more you dwell on any nontraditional or strange behaviors, the longer they may last.

Learn how to treat your teenager as you would an adult

Think about the kind of relationship you would like to have with your child as an adult and start working on it early on in the teen years. Treat your child the way you would like him to treat you as an adult. Your goal should be mutual respect and support as well as the ability to have fun together. Strive for relaxed and casual conversations during activities like cycling, hiking, fishing, playing catch, cooking, driving, and especially at mealtime. Use praise and trust to

help build self-esteem. Recognize and validate your child's feeling by

listening carefully and making non-judgmental comments. By listening it doesn't mean that you have to solve your teen's problems. The friendship model is a good basis for family functioning. In this model people do things for each other out of caring and loyalty. It does not mean bending your behavior or

values in an attempt to be popular with your teen.

While every family's level of tolerance to and ability to cope with teen rebellion is different, under certain circumstances you may need to enlist the help of your physician or mental health provider. Certain behaviors require that you set up an appointment with your teen's physician and you should do so if if your teenager is:

- ◆ clinically depressed or suicidal; is drinking, using illegal drugs, or wants to run away from home
- ◆ taking undue risks like reckless driving or having unsafe sex
- ◆ socially isolated
- ◆ doing poorly in school
- ◆ destructive or violent
- ◆ excessively rebellious
- ◆ disrupting your family life

Your health provider can be a key partner in helping your family cope with both normal and extreme teen rebellion.



Adapted from "Adolescents: Dealing with Normal Rebellion", a publication of The Children's Medical Group of Greenwich, PC.

...you need not accept disrespectful remarks such as being called a "jerk".

Stress Management for Teens

Today's youth have unprecedented stress. This experiential class will teach them to recognize stressors in their lives, understand mechanism of stress, and to transform their response to stressful situations in healthy, creative ways. October 6 from 1-3 PM at the Center for Integrative Medicine, 35 River Road, Cos Cob. \$15

Sponsored by Greenwich Hospital. Call 863-3627 to register or visit <http://www.greenhosp.org/>

Beginning Drivers

Some Facts, Figures and Suggestions

TWEEN DRIVERS HAVE the highest crash risk of any age group. Per mile traveled, they have the highest involvement rates in crashes, from crashes involving property damage only, to those that are fatal. The problem is worst among 16-year-olds, who have the most limited driving experience and an immaturity that often results in risk-taking behind the wheel. The characteristics of 16-year-olds' fatal crashes shed light on the problem:

Driver error: Compared with crashes of older drivers, those of 16-year-olds more often involve driver error.

Speeding: 16-year-old drivers have a higher rate of crashes in which excessive speed is a factor.

Single-vehicle crashes: More of 16-year-olds' fatal crashes involve only the teen's vehicle. Typically these are high-speed crashes in which the driver lost control.

Passengers: 16 year-olds' fatal crashes are more likely to occur when other teenagers are in the car. The risk increases with every additional passenger.

Alcohol: Although this is a problem among drivers of all ages, it's actually less of a problem for 16-year-olds. Typically, less than 15 percent of fatally injured 16-year-old drivers have blood alcohol concentrations of .08

grams per deciliter or greater. However, alcohol quickly becomes a problem in the later teen years.

Night driving: This is a high-risk activity for beginners. Per mile driven, the nighttime fatal crash rate for 16-year-olds is about twice as high as during the day.

Low belt use: Teenagers generally are less likely than adults to use safety belts.

Graduated Licensing Can Help

Teenagers perceive a driver's license as a ticket to freedom. It's momentous for parents, too. Though they are often aware of 16-year-olds' high crash risks, they're relieved not to have to chauffeur their children around anymore. But the price is steep. Crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, accounting for

more than one third of all deaths of 16- to 18-year-olds.

An effective way to reduce this toll is to enact graduated

licensing, under which driving privileges are phased in to restrict beginners' initial experience behind the wheel to lower-risk situations. The restrictions are gradually lifted, so teenagers are more experienced and mature when they get their full, unrestricted licenses.

Graduated systems that are well designed restrict night driving, limit teen passengers, set zero alcohol tolerance, and require

a specified amount of supervised practice during the initial phase. In Connecticut, the graduated license includes restrictions on driving between the hours of midnight and 5 am until age 18 (unless the individual is traveling for employment, school, religious activities, a medical necessity, or Safe Rides), and waiting six months after the license was issued before transporting friends and classmates. In addition, until their 18th birthday, drivers may not use cell phones (even if they are hands-free) or mobile electronic devices while they are driving. These include any hand-held computers or any device with a video display.

What Parents of Teenagers Can Do

With or without a graduated licensing law, parents can establish rules based on the graduated model.

In particular:

- ◆ **Don't rely solely on driver education:** Driver Education may be the most convenient way to learn skills, but it doesn't necessarily produce safer drivers. Poor skills aren't always to blame. Teen attitudes and decision-making matter more. Young people naturally tend to rebel. Teens often think they're immune to harm, so they don't use safety belts as much and they deliberately seek thrills like speeding. Training and education don't change these tendencies. Peer influence is great but parents have much more influence than

Take an active role
in helping your teenager
learn how to drive.

they are typically given credit for.

- ◆ **Know the law:** Become familiar with restrictions on beginning drivers. Enforce the rules. To learn about the law in the different States, go to www.iihs.org/safety_facts/state_laws.

- ◆ **Restrict night driving:** Most young drivers' nighttime fatal crashes occur from 9 p.m. to midnight, so teens shouldn't drive much later than 9 PM. The

problem isn't just that such driving requires more skill. Late outings tend to be recreational, and even teens who usually follow the rules can be easily distracted or encouraged to take risks.

- ◆ **Restrict passengers:** Teen passengers in a vehicle can distract a beginning driver and/or lead to greater risk-taking. Because young drivers often transport their friends, there's a teen *passenger* problem as well as a teen *driver* problem. Over 50% of teenage passenger deaths occur in crashes with a teen driver. While night driving with passengers is particularly lethal, many fatal crashes with teen passengers occur during the day. The best policy is to restrict teenage passengers, especially multiple teens, all the time.

- ◆ **Supervise practice driving:** Take an active role in helping your teenager learn how to drive. Plan a series of practice sessions in a wide variety of situations, including night driving. Give beginners time to work up to challenges like driving in heavy traffic or on the highway. Supervised practice should be

spread over at least six months and continue even after a teenager graduates from a learner's permit to a restricted or full license.

- ◆ **Remember that you're a role model:** New drivers learn a lot by example, so always practice safe driving. Teens with crashes and

violations often have parents with poor driving records.

- ◆ **Require safety belt use:** Don't assume that

The best policy is to restrict passengers... all the time.

belt use when you're in the car with your 16-year-old means safetybelts will be used all the time, especially when your child is out with peers. Remember that belt use is lower among teenagers than older people. Insist on safetybelts all the time.

- ◆ **Prohibit drinking:** Make it clear that it's illegal and highly dangerous for a teenager to drink alcohol. While alcohol isn't a factor in most crashes of 16-year-old drivers, even small amounts of alcohol are impairing for teens.

- ◆ **Choose vehicles for safety, not image:** Teenagers should drive vehicles that reduce their chances of a crash and offer protection in case they do crash. For example, small cars don't offer the best protection in a crash. Avoid cars with performance images that might encourage speeding. Avoid trucks and sport utility vehicles — the smaller ones, especially, are more prone to roll over.



For more information visit:
www.nhsta.dot.gov and
www.iihs.org

ATTENTION Parents of High School Juniors

Those of you who have had children progress through junior year know how demanding it can be for them and you. Not only are they taking a full and often challenging course load but they are also starting the college application process. A little planning can take some of the stress out of the process.

The Tests

The PSAT is administered annually in October and other tests - SAT, SAT Subject Tests and ACT - are administered throughout the year. For more information and to register for the various tests visit www.collegeboard.com or www.act.org. If your child is taking Advanced Placement Courses, the tests for these are administered in May and the Subject Tests for these subjects can be taken around the same time.

The Visits

Now is a good time to start planning some preliminary college visits. To get you started attend **College Night at Greenwich High School on October 18 at 7:30 PM** with your child. Representatives from a number of colleges will be present to introduce you to their schools and answer any questions you might have. You can also suggest to your child that he check out some college websites - many have virtual tours highlighting aspects of the curriculum and campus. You might consider taking day trips to a few colleges in your area simply to get a sense of whether your child might prefer a rural or an urban campus, or a large or small school. Many colleges conveniently hold tours and information sessions on Saturdays and all the schools post the dates and times of these sessions on their website.



Community Notes

Greenwich Alliance for Education Supports Public School Children

by Nancy Kail

Preschoolers captivated by a story read to them in English and Spanish;

Elementary school students beaming with pride after performing in their first music recital;

Middle school students immersed in after-school marine biology research; and

High school students about to begin their freshman year well prepared and confident.

These are just a few children who will have benefited from programs sponsored by the Greenwich Alliance for Education.

The Alliance was formed in 2006 by a group of educators, parents and town leaders who believe that the community has a shared responsibility for ensuring that all of our students achieve educational success. Members feel that more could and should be done to provide enrichment so that more public school children achieve at acceptable levels, and those who are achieving are inspired to attain greater levels of excellence.

Even in a town like Greenwich, there are areas of need. The town has changing diversity and achievement gaps persist. Twenty percent of students in primary grades and at least 24% in secondary grades perform below the Goal Standard set by the Connecticut State Department of Education on assessments of core reading, writing and mathematics skills. Over 17% of all students are non-native English speakers. Approximately 625 Greenwich public school students are eligible for federally subsidized free and reduced-priced lunch programs because of low family incomes.

Greenwich has a strong and

committed Board of Education and central school administration, and a long history of PTA and parent involvement in our schools. Yet, as many parents know, education goes beyond the classroom. And, individual PTA's are restricted in the amounts of money they can spend, and must use funds for their own schools only.

The Greenwich Alliance for Education is our town's first local education foundation. The group is an independent, not for profit, local organization, whose mission is: *to provide opportunities and services that foster educational success for all Greenwich public school students, birth to graduation.*

The Alliance joins thousands of local education foundations nationwide and over 75 local education foundations in Connecticut. Members of the Alliance Steering Committee spent a year researching local education foundation best practices; establishing close working relationships with the education, public and private sector town leaders; identifying specific areas of need and developing programs to address those needs; recruiting a broad-based, diverse Board of Directors, and affiliating with the Connecticut Consortium of Education Foundations. Through careful laying of this groundwork, it was able to introduce three programs:

Tuning in to Music provides private music lessons for elementary school students who are otherwise unable to afford them. This past year, 37 elementary school students took weekly music lessons from professional music instructors. These young musicians capped off their semester of lessons with a formal music recital. This coming year the Alliance will expand Tuning in to

Music to include at least 50 students. **Going Places with Books** is an early childhood literacy program which uses a Storymobile to bring enjoyable, interactive bilingual literacy experiences to preschool age children where they live, learn and play. This year the Storymobile gets rolling on a full time basis, with regular visits to numerous town preschools and day care programs, as well as our public housing facilities and other sites.

Reaching Out Grants provides significant grants to community partners to develop inventive, sustainable programs that address identified areas of need among public school students. This past year the Alliance provided nearly \$90,000 in grants to the following programs:

- ♦ *Greenwich High School Skills for Success*, a summer school and adult to student mentoring program for approximately 30 entering freshmen requiring support transitioning into high school.
- ♦ *EMS/WMS Adventure Racing Program*, providing academic and physical challenges for diverse teams of students entering middle school.
- ♦ *Soundwaters Coastal Investigation*, a hands-on marine biology after school program that engages a mix of middle school students.
- ♦ *Greenwich Arts Council Minds in Motion*, a pilot enrichment program linking dance and math for 3rd and 4th grade students at Hamilton Avenue and Glenville elementary schools.

The Alliance plans to expand existing initiatives and develop additional programs. It will collaborate with town groups and individuals, evaluate its efforts and produce measurable indicators of success for each undertaking.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
For more information or to volunteer please call 698-7730 or visit www.greenwichalliance.org

Parents Together 2007–2008

Delegates

Parents Together's strength as an organization stems from its effort to address broad parenting issues on a townwide basis, and on narrower topics specific to individual schools.

Making sure this happens are delegates from every public and independent elementary, middle and upper school in Greenwich. Please share with your delegates the parenting issues that are on your mind so that they can tailor programs to best fit the needs of your school community. *Parents Together* thanks the following parents who have generously volunteered to serve as delegates in their schools this year

Brunswick School
Jackie Keeshan & Jane Shang

Central Middle School
Mamie Lee

Convent of the Sacred Heart
Rhonda Morley

Cos Cob School
Lisa Edmundson

Eagle Hill
Mia Weinberg

Eastern Middle School
Christa Panny

Glenville School
Carol Fox

Greenwich Academy
Jenny Collins & Allyson Cowin

Greenwich Catholic School
Lisa MacCarrick & Susan Schuller

Greenwich Country Day School
Karen Marache & Jeannie Rose

Greenwich High School
Donna Arnold & Linda Layman

Hamilton Avenue School
Patty Reilly

International School at Dundee
Suzanne Deschamps

Julian Curtiss School
TBA

Mead School
Susie Lindenberg

New Lebanon School
Andrea Vaz

North Mianus School
Emma King & Siobhan O'Connor

North Street School
Denise Fava

Old Greenwich School
Carol Marinelli &
McKenzie VanMeel

Parkway School
Stefanie Laroff Jampole &
Vicky Newman

Riverside School
Cynthia Nelli

Stanwich School
Robin Brown

Westchester Fairfield Hebrew Acad.
Lisa Greenburg

Western Middle School
TBA

Whitby School
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Our Heartfelt Thanks

Your donations are continuously needed to fund our newsletters and programs. Our sincere thanks to the contributors listed below whose gifts were received recently.

Workshops – \$1000 or more

Greenwich Country Day School
Anne & Clay Rohrbach, III

Guidelines – \$500 or more

Brunswick School Parents Association
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas B. Ketchum
Barbara Vogt Kugler
Ginny & Tom Hughes
Stanwich School Parents Association

Sponsors – \$250 or more

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Liz & Keith Fleischman
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Sheila Moeller Wilson

Friends – up to \$100

Early Childhood Center, Inc
Andrew K. & Maria Quinn Fellows
Stephen L. & Katherine B. Larson
Mary Ellen & Brad Markowitz
Nancy Smith

Who We Are

Parents Together is an independent, nonprofit organization in Greenwich, CT, that offers ongoing opportunities for parents to communicate, share, support and learn together. We work in cooperation with the Parent Teacher Associations of the public, private and parochial schools in town. The *Parents Together* organization and delegates from Greenwich schools plan programs for parents in grades K-12. We also publish two quarterly newsletters: *Parents Together Primer*, for parents of children from birth through fifth grade, and *Parents Together*, for parents of adolescents. **Distribution:** *Parents Together Primer* is distributed to parents through their children's preschools and elementary schools. *Parents Together* is sent to parents of children in grades 6 through 12 in all Greenwich public and independent schools.

Newsletter Subscriptions and Correspondence: We invite parents and all other readers interested in local parenting issues to subscribe to either or both newsletters. For an **annual subscription**, please indicate which newsletter you wish to receive, and send your name, address and \$12 for each subscription with a check payable to *Parents Together*, to P. O. Box 4843, Greenwich, CT 06831-0417. Correspondence may be mailed to the same address.

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Upcoming Programs

All programs are held in the Cone Room at Town Hall and start at 9:15 AM unless otherwise specified. They are free and open to the public.

September 17: "Eat Fit, Be Fit", presented by dietician & author, Linda Arpino. Basic nutrition for children and teens will be the main focus of this program but topics such as body image, sports fitness, and food marketing will be also be discussed. *This topic has been the most requested by PT families.*

October 1: "Reading Aloud: Motivating Children to Make Books into Friends, Not Enemies" with Jim Trelease.
7:30 PM at Cos Cob School

October 9: "What You Don't Know Can Keep You Out of College". Don Dunbar, nationally-known expert on the college-admission process, will discuss 13 fatal application mistakes and how he believes **character** is the key to college admissions. **7:30 PM at Arcadia Coffee Co.**

October 15: "The Balanced Mom - Raising your Kids Without Losing Yourself", presented by life coach and parenting specialist Bria Simpson. This interactive workshop will help mothers develop a healthy balance in their lives by clarifying values, overcoming mommy-perfection, and becoming more organized.

November 5: "Stress and the Kids of Today", presented by clinical psychologist, Dr. Roni Cohen-Sandler. Dr. Sandler will give strategies to help reduce stress in our children's lives. Learn who is at risk, the symptoms to look for, and strategies to apply as well as those to avoid.

Location TBA

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