

LA TEEN THERAPIST
Parenting Support Manual

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
MY BEHAVIORS	5
MY RESPONSIBILITIES	9
CHARACTER BUILDING	11
LIFE SKILLS	15
CONTRACT AGREEMENT	17
DISCIPLINE VERSUS PUNISHMENT	21
KNOWING WHO THEIR FRIENDS ARE	22
RAISING EMOTIONALLY RESILIENT TEENAGERS	23

INTRODUCTION

This Teen Life Coach Parenting Support Packet is designed to help you and your teen reflect on their behavior as well as your expectations for their behavior and open a discussion where mutual understanding and cooperation can take place. It is important that parents clearly define their expectations with regard to their teenager's behavior and responsibilities, both at home and away from home. As a parent, you act as both a mentor and a role model. Your responsibility is to teach your child the skills they will need to succeed in the world prior to leaving your home.

This packet has five main parts:

1. **My Behaviors** is to be used to identify the behaviors that are expected from your family members.
2. **My Responsibilities** is to be used to clarify your expectations for your teen with regard to household chores, checking in, homework, grooming, computer usage, etc.
3. **Character Building** can be used to discuss values you want to instill in your teen.
4. **Life Skills** is designed to guide you and your teen in a discussion about skills they will need to cultivate in order to successfully participate in the world.
5. **Contractual Agreement** allows you to put in writing the expected behaviors and responsibilities you and your teen have agreed to, along with the agreed upon positive and negative consequences when those behaviors and responsibilities being upheld or not.

Parents are expected to provide their children with a roof over their head, food to eat, clothes to wear, medical treatment, and protection from harm. However, cell phones, computers, spending money, stylish clothes, extracurricular activities and driving or being driven to their friend's homes are all privileges that a child may earn through respectful and cooperative behavior toward their parents.

Implementing these concepts can take some time, which will vary substantially depending on the emotional maturity of your child. Don't feel like you have to tackle them all at once. If there are other significant issues that are being addressed, you may want to study these concepts and implement them when you can. We can discuss examples and share other reading material that will assist you with methods of implementing these concepts.

In some situations, parents have not had the previous experience of entering into a similar discussion with their own parents. Therefore, I am more than happy to work together with you and your child to facilitate these discussions.

Sincerely,

Sandra Dupont MA, MS, MFT

Teen Therapist / Adolescent Phase of Life Coach

MY BEHAVIORS

- ◆ I will speak in a respectful tone of voice and will refrain from cussing/name-calling.
- ◆ I will speak in a respectful tone of voice and will refrain from whining or pouting.
- ◆ I will use an appropriate voice-level and will refrain from yelling and/or shouting.
- ◆ I will accept limits and restrictions without arguing or complaining.
- ◆ I will accept limits and restrictions without whining or begging.
- ◆ I will ask for things in a respectful manner rather than being demanding or rude.
- ◆ I will follow directions immediately rather than stalling or dawdling.
- ◆ I will take care of my obligations without procrastinating.
- ◆ I will put forth my best effort instead of just getting by with the bare minimum.
- ◆ I will be polite and use good manners.
- ◆ I will be respectful to others rather than teasing, provoking or instigating.
- ◆ I will be respectful to others rather than being bossy or controlling.
- ◆ I will be respectful to others by not interrupting or being disruptive.
- ◆ I will ignore negative behaviors or annoyances instead of tattling (unless it is a safety issue).
- ◆ I will resolve my conflicts in a peaceful manner without resorting to hostility or aggression.
- ◆ I will cooperate with others instead of being stubborn or greedy.
- ◆ I will get my needs met appropriately without being manipulative or deceitful.
- ◆ I will act like a positive role model rather than a negative influence.
- ◆ I will resist peer pressure rather than showing weakness by giving in to it.
- ◆ I will not encourage others to do things that are negative, dangerous or inappropriate.

- ◆ I will accept responsibility for my behaviors rather than blaming others or making excuses.
- ◆ I will follow directions without engaging in “selective hearing” (ignoring).
- ◆ I will follow directions without becoming defiant or engaging in power struggles.
- ◆ I will act my age instead of acting immaturely.
- ◆ I will talk about my feelings rather than acting them out.
- ◆ I will ask for advice if I am dealing with something stressful or difficult (instead of bottling it up).
- ◆ I will control my anger by practicing and using relaxation techniques.
- ◆ I will control my anger by taking a self-imposed “time-out” to cool off.
- ◆ I will develop a plan for dealing with my anger and will use it when necessary.
- ◆ I will not engage in aggressive behavior when I am angry.
- ◆ I will not engage in destructive behavior when I am angry.
- ◆ I will solve problems or conflicts without resorting to threats or intimidation.
- ◆ I will put the feelings and needs of others before mine at times rather than being a “me first” kid.
- ◆ I will respect the feelings of others by being thoughtful and understanding.
- ◆ I will respect the privacy of others by not getting involved in matters that are not my business.
- ◆ I will respect the privacy and dignity of others by not spreading rumors or gossip about them.
- ◆ I will establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with others (social and physical boundaries).
- ◆ I will avoid behaviors that are dangerous or reckless.
- ◆ I will be humble and will take pride in my accomplishments without bragging or boasting.
- ◆ I will practice being cheerful and optimistic rather than presenting a negative attitude.
- ◆ I will express myself more seriously instead of constantly clowning around.

- ◆ I will become more involved in family matters rather than avoiding them or isolating myself.
- ◆ I will improve my diet by eating healthier foods and by minimizing my “junk food” consumption.
- ◆ I will become active by participating regularly in physical activities, sports or exercise.
- ◆ I will take pride in my appearance by dressing appropriately and by maintaining good hygiene.
- ◆ I will find positive ways to get attention around the house.
- ◆ I will be helpful to others when appropriate.

NOTES:

MY RESPONSIBILITIES

- ◆ I will not leave dirty dishes, dirty laundry, trash, or any of my personal belongings lying around the house.
- ◆ I will rinse off my dishes after eating and put them in the dishwasher (if applicable).
- ◆ I will maintain a tidy and presentable bedroom -- one that is free of trash, clutter and/or filth.
- ◆ I will put things away when I am finished using them.
- ◆ I will turn off the TV, game console and other electronics when I am finished using them.
- ◆ I will ask for permission before using something that does not belong to me, and I will return it when I am finished using it.
- ◆ If I am away from home, then I will check in every _____ hour(s) unless I am at school or I have otherwise been given permission not to check in.
- ◆ I will get permission before going places or doing things that are not a part of my normal routine.
- ◆ I will attend school and take care to note all of my assignments.
- ◆ I will come straight home after school unless permission to do otherwise has been given.
- ◆ I will complete my homework each night before going to bed (or as described).
- ◆ I will wash, fold and put away my own laundry.
- ◆ I will maintain appropriate hygiene by showering and brushing my teeth regularly and by keeping my hair and nails properly groomed.
- ◆ I will refrain from using drugs, alcohol, and/or tobacco in any form.
- ◆ I will always wear a seatbelt when driving or riding in an automobile. No exceptions.
- ◆ I will replace what I have lost and repair what I have broken.
- ◆ I will not interact with people that I do not know on the computer. I will report suspicious

people to my parent(s).

- ◆ I will attend family meetings / events as expected.
- ◆ I will attend religious services as expected.
- ◆ I will not receive any body piercings or tattoos without prior sincere discussion and parental permission.
- ◆ I will obey all the laws and ordinances of my community.
- ◆ My curfew is ___:___pm on school nights and ___:___pm on non-school nights.
- ◆ My bedtime is ___:___pm on school nights and ___:___pm on non-school nights.
- ◆ I will complete my chores in a timely manner. My chores are as follows:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
- ◆ I am restricted from going to this place: _____
- ◆ I am restricted from spending time with: _____
(This includes anyone who uses or sells drugs whether or not they are specifically named.)
- ◆ I am restricted from engaging in the following activities: _____
- ◆ Other: _____

CHARACTER BUILDING

PEACEFULNESS

It is essential that you start discovering peaceful solutions to any conflicts or differences you may have with others. This means you will need to negotiate or find a compromise when there is a problem or issue, rather than yelling, arguing or acting out.

FLEXIBILITY

Try to “go with the flow” rather than always having to do things on your own terms. It is important to be able to adjust to unexpected circumstances without automatically complaining or showing anger. You need to understand and accept that things will not always go as you’ve planned.

INITIATIVE

Try helping out around the house without having to be asked. Complete tasks and/or chores because you are aware that they need to be done, not because you were told to do it or because you expect something in return. Being helpful is the right thing to do as part of a family.

EXCELLENCE

Utilize your talents and skills to do your very best work. Be the best that you can be instead of trying to “slide by” with a minimal amount of effort. Always do things to the best of your ability.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Take full responsibility for your behavior without making excuses or blaming others. Accept the consequences of your behavior without arguing or complaining. Make things “right” as necessary (replace what you have lost, repair what you have broken, etc.).

RELIABILITY

Meet all of your obligations and follow through with your promises and agreements. Be a person that others can depend on (show up on time, complete tasks as expected, etc.). Meet or exceed the expectations that others have of you.

HONESTY

Speak the truth. Admit to mistakes and/or wrongdoings when confronted. Avoid using deception or manipulation to get your needs met. Don't lie, cheat or steal.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Demonstrate to others that you can be counted on. Be worthy of trust. Show others that you are dependable and able to keep your word.

PATIENCE

Wait calmly and quietly when there is a delay. Try to endure delays or difficult situations without arguing, whining or complaining. You need to be able to tolerate setbacks without losing control of yourself, and accept the differences and mistakes of others without criticizing or acting upset.

CLEANLINESS

It is essential to maintain a clean body, mind and environment. Therefore you need to be organized, pick up after yourself, and stay away from activities or substances that are harmful to your body or mind.

INTEGRITY

Be proud of who you are and of the decisions you make. Act honorably. Do what you know is right, despite what others are doing. Watch out for others when they need help, like you would want them to do for you. Stand up for what you believe. Set a good example for others.

WISDOM

Use common sense and good judgment when making decisions. Learn from your mistakes and from the mistakes of others so that those mistakes are not repeated. Consider the natural consequences of your behavior before acting in an irresponsible manner. Never be afraid to ask your parents for help, especially if you or someone you know is in a serious predicament.

PURPOSE

Stay focused on your goals. Accomplish something positive. Create a vision of what you want to do and how you plan to do it. Work towards a cause. Determine the steps that are necessary to meet a specific goal then follow them.

PERSEVERENCE

Work toward a goal without quitting or giving up. Put forth your best effort despite any obstacles. Stay focused and driven to succeed.

KINDNESS/COURTESY

Be considerate and respectful toward others. Be polite and well mannered. Use kind words such as, "Please," "Thank you," "Sorry," and "Excuse me" when appropriate. Be friendly. Give compliments.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Take control of your emotions rather than letting them take control of you. Do what is expected of you without others having to watch over you and tell you what to do. Complete your tasks in an orderly and timely manner. Be prompt when you are expected to be somewhere at a particular time.

MODERATION

Don't over-engage in meaningless activities such as watching television, playing video games, or "chatting" on-line. Establish a healthy balance in your life with regard to friends, foods, or activities. Set firm limits and boundaries for yourself then stick to them.

NOTES:

SKILL-BUILDING

INSTRUCTIONS:

Set aside a portion of time each week to discuss and teach some of the following skills to your child. The best way to approach these subjects is by creating heartfelt discussions. You may want to consider setting aside 20 minutes a day where there are no interruptions. Turn off cell phones and try to pick a time when you do not have other things that either of you need to be doing.

Discuss no more than three or four skills during each session. Give praise when a skill is successfully demonstrated and constructive criticism when it is not. Try to make this a positive experience for your child.

- How to initiate and carry on a conversation
- How to make an appropriate apology
- How to get another person's attention without interrupting
- How to do properly introduce one's self and others
- How to maintain proper and appropriate hygiene
- How to use proper table manners
- How to give and receive compliments
- How to resist peer-pressure and still maintain dignity with peers
- How to cope with anger
- How to cope with sadness
- How to cope with embarrassment
- How to cope with disappointment
- How to cope with rejection
- How to cope with criticism
- How to cope with fear
- How to combat boredom

- How to manage feelings related to loss/grief
- How to express feelings appropriately
- How to get active in a cause or be of service to others
- How to show appreciation
- How to plan and prepare a meal
- How to properly maintain an automobile
- How to problem-solve or use conflict resolution techniques to avoid arguments
- How to manage time effectively
- How to demonstrate good sportsmanship
- How to respond to teasing or provoking
- How to be a smart consumer
- How to manage stress
- How to maintain proper boundaries with others
- How to demonstrate skills that are necessary for independent living
- How to make minor repairs and/or improvements around the house*
- How to recognize a person of poor character
- How to recognize the potential natural consequences of irresponsible behavior
- How to demonstrate an appropriate sense of humor
- How to conserve resources (recycle, reduce and re-use)
- How and when to be assertive with others
- How to act (and what to say) during a job interview
- How to minimize the chances of becoming a victim of crime
- How to handle an emergency situation (give different scenarios)
- How to earn, save and spend money responsibly
- How to make wise choices regarding money and/or spending

**** Note:** Make every effort to demonstrate common household repairs or improvements to your child as they occur.

CONTRACT AGREEMENT

I agree to meet the expectations that have been identified in the preceding pages. I understand that I must demonstrate behavior that is responsible and appropriate if I expect to earn more freedom and/or privileges at home.

Failure to meet the expectations that have been established for me will result in further restrictions and less trust. Less trust means fewer privileges and freedoms.

Here is the first level of privileges (i.e., allowance, use of computer, time with friends, cell phone) I can expect with regard to my agreement to meet the expectations:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If it has been determined that I have met the expectations of the preceding contract(s), then I will also be granted the following second level privileges (i.e., a later curfew, driving privileges, special events or purchases):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If it has been determined that I have not met the expectations of the preceding contract(s) then I will not be granted the privileges listed above. I will also earn the following consequences (i.e., no television, use of home phone, no extracurricular activities):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Notice: All privileges and restrictions are earned on the day that follows the behavior. In other words:

Today's Behavior = Tomorrow's Privileges/Restrictions

Yesterday's Behavior = Today's Privileges/Restrictions

I agree to follow the stipulations set forth in this / these contract(s) and will accept the privileges and restrictions I earn as described.

Signature of Teen _____ Date _____

Signature of Parent _____ Date _____

Signature of Therapist _____ Date _____

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Signature of Parent _____ Date _____

Signature of Therapist _____ Date _____

DISCIPLINE VERSUS PUNISHMENT

Are you aware there is a difference between punishment and discipline? Punishment is designed to control a person's behavior and is not effective for teaching teens to become responsible and independent young adults.

WHAT IS PUNISHMENT?

Punishment includes threats, yelling, and verbal insults. If you are frequently yelling at your child, chances are that they may start to pay attention to you only when you raise your voice. Insults are not healthy for anyone, and when teens hear you yelling and using verbal insults, they learn to do that behavior too.

DOES GROUNDING YOUR CHILD WORK?

Often parents punish teenagers by grounding them. Many times grounding is not related to what the teen did, therefore they have difficulty learning the lesson you are trying to teach them.

WHAT DOES HITTING ACCOMPLISH?

Some parents hit their child out of anger. Hitting hurts both the teen and the parent, because the teen feels unloved and the parent feels guilty. The teen also learns that hitting is a way to get power or solve their problem.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Discipline is a respectful way of relating to your child. Discipline teaches your teen to become more responsible and cooperative. Discipline allows your teen to learn from their behavior and the natural consequences of their choices.

GIVING THEM ROOM TO GROW

Teens need limits, but those limits need to be adjusted as your teen becomes more mature. Many parents are often afraid to let their teen make their own decisions. However, it is very important to allow teens a chance to make and learn from their choices—within certain limits.

KNOWING WHO THEIR FRIENDS ARE

Instead of staying in their immediate neighborhood, teens are biking, taking a bus, or asking parents to drive them to nearby cities to meet up with their friends.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR TEEN IS?

Parents may think they know where their teen is, but this is not always the case. Telling a parent that they are spending the night at one friend's, they get another parent to drive them across town to a party, working out their ride home however they can.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR TEEN'S FRIENDS?

Although this may not reflect your teen's behavior, the point I am making is that it is important to know who your child's friends are. I would even go further to suggest that you also get to know who their friend's parents are, that you might have a sense of the type of values they uphold in their homes.

DIFFERENT FAMILIES HAVE DIFFERENT RULES

In your home, there may be strict curfews, as well as restrictions around alcohol and other mind-altering substances. But in other homes, parents will sometimes turn a blind eye to their kid's entertainment activities, including drinking, and unsupervised access to bedrooms.

THE PARENT IN CHARGE OF YOUR TEEN'S SAFETY

I believe that it is a wise parent who asks to meet all of their teens friends, and gets contact information for any sleep-overs or parties, including the address, phone number and the name of the adult in charge of the event. Although your teen may balk at the idea, it is responsible behavior to call and introduce yourself, verify the details, and get a feel for whom that parent is.

TRUST IS SOMETHING EARNED

The boundaries you set for your teen shows your caring. Do not cave in under pressure when presented with the claim that "all the other parents let their kids ..." (fill in the blank) I can assure you that there are plenty of parents who still expect their children earn their trust.

RAISING EMOTIONALLY RESILIENT TEENAGERS

Children learn early on that in order to please others, they sometimes have to give up being who they are. Frequently, the message they receive is “behave in a way that is comfortable and convenient for me.” Since it is their natural inclination to want to feel connected, children may put aside their feelings to “belong.” As children try and mold themselves to fit an image that their parents, teachers or friends want them to be, they may suppress their needs to the point where they are no longer in touch with what they really feel.

Adolescence, with all the changes that accompany it, can be an intense time where teens are overwhelmed by new feelings. If teens believe that they are responsible for making other’s happy, or that others are responsible for making them happy, they become a victim of others’ choices.

While is not uncommon for parents to have expectations that they wish their teen to fulfill, it is essential that parents also provide their children with the space to truly be seen and heard. Ultimately, the lessons you want and need to teach them are:

- ◆ Love and appreciate yourself.
- ◆ Stand strong in what is true for you.
- ◆ Trust and believe in yourself.
- ◆ Don’t waste time looking for other’s approval.

Parents typically teach what they know. If you came from a household where your parents were absent or pre-occupied with their own challenges, you may have be left to grow-up on your own. Depending upon the age difference between you and your child, you may also not yet have had the opportunity to master the life skills you want to teach.

In closing, it has been said that it “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” In reality, there is great value in reaching out for support during the process of laying a solid foundation for your child’s future. You are not required to do it alone. Through enlisting the help of professional resources, family, and friends, you can provide your child with the experiences necessary for them to become strong, successful and emotionally healthy young adults.

NOTES:

Sandra Dupont is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist specializing in the adolescent phase of life. She has a private practice in Santa Monica, California and writes a teen advice blog www.losangelesteentherapist.com. She helps teens approach challenges with confidence and competence. She also helps parents understand issues facing teens today and how to support their children successfully navigate the teen years.

