

## **Family Time: Teens and Tweens Series: Parent-Child Communication**

Jasmine K. Bassett, Extension Associate II & Rebecca Menge, UOG Extension Intern  
Cooperative Extension & Outreach, College of Natural & Applied Sciences,  
University of Guam

Parent-child relationships involve communication and interactions to prepare “tweens” ages (10 through 12) and teens (ages 13 through 19) with skills and abilities to make healthy decisions. Each year hundreds of thousands of young people engage in risky and negative behaviors, that range from trying a cigarette for the first time to becoming addicted to prescription drugs.

Parent-child communication doesn’t start at middle school; it starts at the very beginning of life. Open dialogue between parents and children builds on top of many topics with time.

### **Parent-Child Communication**

- **Encouragement**
  - Encourage tweens and teens to take on opportunities such as joining clubs to gain work skills and develop friendships.
  - When youth participate in community-based organizations they are 26% more likely to be recognized for good grades and 20% more likely to plan on graduating high school.
  - When youth participate and community-based organizations they have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy and are 2 ½ times more likely to view community service as important.
  - When youth participate in the community or in school organizations, they can develop leadership skills among their peers.
- **Reinforce good behavior**
  - Parents of tweens and teens can use positive behavior acknowledgment
    - “You were in a tough spot, and you handled it well. I am so proud of the way you are growing up.”
    - As the adult, let tweens and teens know they are important to you.
- **Have realistic expectations**
  - A problematic situation is when tweens and teens are pressured to perform at a higher level than what they are capable of, especially in school. It’s tough to expect a 13-year-old to act like a 25-year-old. Age-appropriate tasks and expectations, such as household chores, teach responsibility.
- **Parents can share experiences and feelings openly to build trust**
  - Focus on the issue: “Let’s talk about getting here on time.”
  - Acknowledge tension: “I am a little bit nervous talking about this.”
  - Giving and getting feedback: “I’m not sure what you’re saying. Can you explain that again?”
  - Look for a change: “Let’s think of other ways we could do this.”
  - Be an active listener: “Uh-huh... Go on... I see...”
  - Share vulnerability: “I’m not that sure of myself sometimes.”
  - Find harmful patterns to know future change: “I didn’t realize... What needs to be done?”
  - Find strength in self and others: “I knew you could do it... That’s something to build on.”

## For further information

Contact the University of Guam, Cooperative Extension and Outreach at 735-2080 for help or more information. Additional publications can be found on our website at: [uog.edu/extension/publications](http://uog.edu/extension/publications).

## References

Naughton, Sandra. "Youth and Communities Helping Each Other Community-Based Organizations Using Service-Learning as a Strategy during out-of-School Time." *Youth and Communities Helping Each Other Community-Based Organizations Using Service-Learning as a Strategy during out-of-School Time, July 2000. National Service Fellowship Program*, <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/r1803-youth-and-communities-helping-each-other.pdf>.

National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"Methamphetamine (Ice) Effects, Addiction & Withdrawal." *Your Room*, <https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/methamphetamine.aspx>.

"Addiction and Negative Effects of Drug Abuse on the Human Body & Brain." *Gateway Foundation*, <https://www.gatewayfoundation.org/substance-abuse-treatment-programs/effects-of-drug-abuse/>.

*Commonly Abused Drugs. Commonly Abused Drugs*, National Institute of Health, 2018, [https://d14rmgtrwzf5a.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/commonly\\_abused\\_drugs.pdf](https://d14rmgtrwzf5a.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/commonly_abused_drugs.pdf).

"Prevention Pays." *Cooperative Extension*, <http://extension.udel.edu/factsheets/prevention-pays/>.

*Teens: Smoking, Alcohol & Drugs. Teens: Smoking, Alcohol & Drugs*, Cooperative Extension Program, [http://www.tnstate.edu/extension/documents/4HY\\_9\\_Teens\\_and\\_Drugs.pdf](http://www.tnstate.edu/extension/documents/4HY_9_Teens_and_Drugs.pdf).

*The Opioid Crisis: What You Need to Know. The Opioid Crisis: What You Need to Know*, Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Services, 2018, <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3404.pdf>.

Silliman, Ben. "Making a Difference the Lives of Youth ... Does It Make a Difference What We Do?" *Chinook*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, pp. 1–10., <https://nc4h.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Chinook7n2.pdf? fwd=no>.

Community-Based Organizations Using Service-Learning as a Strategy during out-of-School Time, July 2000. National Service Fellowship Program, <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/r1803-youth-and-communities-helping-each-other.pdf>.

Published: May 07, 2021

Published by the College of Natural & Applied Sciences (CNAS), University of Guam, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Dr. Lee S. Yudin, Director/Dean, University of Guam, CNAS, UOG Station, Mangilao, Guam 96923. © For reproduction and use permission, contact [cnasteam@triton.uog.edu](mailto:cnasteam@triton.uog.edu), (671) 735-2080. The University of Guam is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution providing programs and services to the people of Guam without regard to race, sex, gender identity and expression, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, arrest and court record, sexual orientation, or status as a covered veteran. Find CNAS publications at [uog.edu/extension/publications](http://uog.edu/extension/publications)