

HealthyCommunities

Brentwood~East Kingston~Exeter~Kensington~Newfields~Stratham



During the fall (2000) the first three newsletters were distributed and there were community forums held for parents on: *Teenagers: Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Teen Depression and Suicide*. The current newsletter will be followed by two more: *Sexuality and Parent-Teen Communication*. A community forum will accompany all three-newsletter topics for parents. A community forum on *Parent Teen Relationships* is scheduled for Thursday 2/15 7:00-8:30 P.M.. In the Exeter High School Science Lecture Hall. Look for information on future community forums in the Exeter Newsletter, School District Web site (www.ercsd.k12.nh.us), future wrap sheets to future *Whose Kids?.....Our Kids!!!!* Principal Newsletters from CMS, and posters throughout the community.

Exciting extracurricular opportunities for middle school students.

There are a few opportunities for high school students ***

HealthyCommunities works closely with three community groups that provide a rich array of extracurricular activities to youth in the SAU-16 school district: City Year, Outlook Teen Center, and Camp Lincoln. A brochure of all the programs is available by picking one up from the main office of the Cooperative Middle School (CMS), calling the City Year Team office at 773-1860 and requesting that the CMS After School Program brochure be sent to you, (Don't forget to leave your name and mailing address.), or checking the Cooperative School District Website: www.ercsd.k12.nh.us. Most programs are targeted toward middle school students. The Outlook Teen Center does sponsor programs and activities for high school students, contact the Outlook Teen Center directly for more information (Susan Belitsky-***778-3933)

The Upcoming Community Forums for Parents

Parent-Teen Relationships

Feb 15, 2001

EHS

7:00-8:30 p.m

Science Lecture Hall

Teen Sexuality in March and *Parent-Teen Communication* in Early May, date and time to be announced

If you have questions about the newsletters or community forums contact Karen Pelletier at Exeter High School, 778-7772, extension 8444.

If you have questions or have any interest in becoming involved with **HealthyCommunities**, contact Jennifer Kinsey, Coordinator at 772-5435 or email: jskb@mediaone.net. (Note: this is a new email address.)



Whose Kids?...Our Kids!

Exeter Region Cooperative School District Parent-Teen Relationships

Recently, the Exeter Region Cooperative School District, Rockingham County UNH Cooperative Extension and community members joined together to learn more about the youth in our community by conducting the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

Approximately 89% of the students were surveyed in the Exeter Region Cooperative School District. In all, information from 2045 surveys was used for this newsletter.

		Male	Female
399	7 th graders	197	202
392	8 th graders	205	187
377	9 th graders	173	204
359	10 th graders	182	177
289	11 th graders	137	152
229	12 th graders	110	119

“Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” is a parent newsletter series of the Teen Assessment Project (TAP), a program of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Support for this project was provided by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Jeffrey Gutin Fund and Safe and Drug Free School and Communities Grants. The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) originated at the University of Wisconsin at Madison under the direction of Stephen A. Small, Ph.D. Exeter TAP in Rockingham County was under the direction of Lynn Garland, UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H Educator in cooperation with Charlotte W. Cross, UNH Cooperative Extension, Youth Development Specialist. For more information about TAP call Charlotte W. Cross at (603) 862-2495 or e-mail at charlotte.cross@unh.edu.

This issue of “WHOSE KIDS?...OUR KIDS!” focuses on parent-teen relationships. Tips are given to parents on balancing guidance and control with their teenagers’ need for independence.

Parenting a teenager can be difficult at times. It also can be exciting and rewarding. Parents who have good relationships with their teens welcome the signs that show their children are growing up.

These parents learn about the normal development of their children. They’re also willing to gradually change the parent-child relationship. The relationship changes as the skills, needs, and concerns of their teens change.

Changing your relationship with your teenager doesn’t mean giving up your role as a parent. Your teen still needs you, but in a different way.

- How can parents keep a good relationship with their children during the teenage years?
- How can parents balance their teens’ needs for independence and guidance?
- How can parents help their teens become responsible and independent?

Building Blocks to Effective Parenting of Teens

Begin with love & support

Allow some independence but provide guidance

Set clear and reasonable limits, but be flexible

Know what to expect & be willing to change

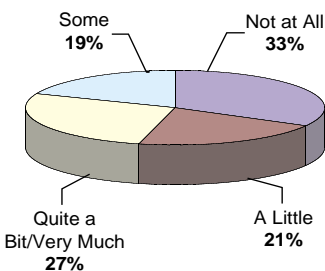
Be fair with discipline

Getting Along With Parents

In our survey, we found most youth thought their mothers *cared* about them “often” or “very often” (92%). Many said the same about their fathers (84%). But a few of the teens believed their father “never” or “rarely” cared about them. A small number of teens believed the same thing about their mothers.

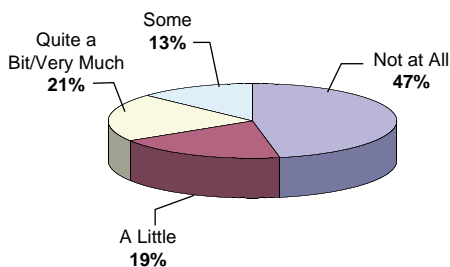
Most local teenagers believe they have a good relationship with their parents. However, they seem to *worry* about getting along with their parents at home. Many said they worried “quite a bit” or “very much.” Some reported they worry at least “some” or “a little.” In addition, many students worry “quite a bit” or “very much” about their parents getting along with each other.

“How much do you worry about getting along with your parent(s)?”



Number Responding 2029

“How much do you worry about your parents getting along with each other?”



Number Responding 2027

Begin With Love and Support

Like younger children, teenagers need to know you care about them. Support and love are important for teens' healthy development and good parent-teen relationships. Here are a few ways to let your teens know you love and support them.

- **Spend time together.**
Go to a special event, share an activity you *both* enjoy, work together on a home project, or plan a special family meal. Time spent one-on-one can help strengthen the ties between you.
- **Talk about your teen's interests and concerns.**
Don't read a newspaper when your teen wants to talk. Don't only talk about negative things such as the mess in your teenager's room! Talk with your teen when things are going well. Show an interest in what's happening in your teenager's life.
- **Be supportive.**
Things that don't seem important to adults can be very important to teens. Teenagers may feel angry, sad, or disappointed if they aren't asked to a dance, break out with pimples, or start to shave long after their friends. Remember that teenagers, especially young teenagers, don't have your experience. They can feel deep emotions over their daily ups and downs. Try to be as understanding as you can.

Know What to Expect and Change Your Relationship as Needed

How can you keep a good relationship with your teen? You'll need to change as your teen's needs and abilities change. Consider your growing teenager's:

- need for privacy,
- ability to reason and make decisions, especially those which affect him or her,
- need to spend time with friends,
- need to dress and be like friends,
- need for greater freedom and independence.

Parents and Teens: Decision-Making

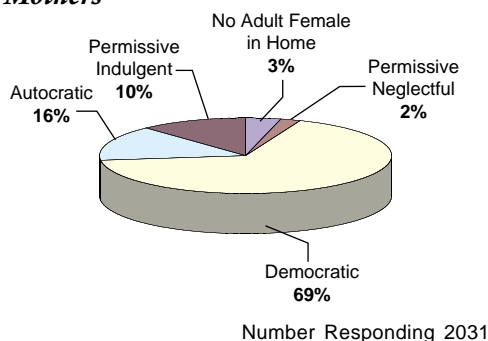
How do local teens and their parents make important decisions? “What time do teens need to be home?” “Where can they go with friends?”

As the charts below show, most parents use a “democratic” parenting method. With this method, both parents and teens voice their opinions about issues. They come to a decision together.

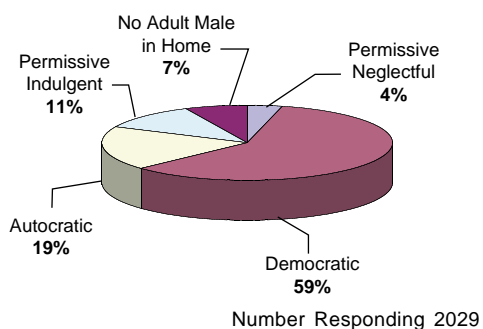
There are also parents who use more of an “autocratic” style. They tell their children exactly what to do. Fathers were slightly more likely than mothers to use an “autocratic” style.

A number of parents use a “permissive” style. These parents aren’t involved in making decisions. They trust their teens to make their own decisions (“permissive indulgent”). Or, they simply aren’t interested in their childrens’ lives (“permissive neglectful”).

Mothers



Fathers



Many parents are afraid their teens will suddenly turn away from family values. Studies show that most teens don’t. Teens will try to be like their friends in style of dress, hair, and music. Many families argue over chores, curfew, hairstyles, and clothes. But even with this bickering, most teens feel close to their parents. Many have similar values to their parents, even as they try to become independent and make their own decisions.

Balance Guidance and Control With Independence

Teenagers are soon to become independent young adults. Therefore, they need more and more freedom. At the same time, they need guidance and direction from their parents. How can parents give guidance *and* independence?

- **Involve your teen in decision-making.**

Some teens are successful, responsible, and feel good about themselves. These teens have parents who allow them to talk about their ideas and opinions. Their parents explain the reasons behind the rules they set. They don’t just set rules in a “no-questions-asked” way.

In addition, parents involve their teens in making many rules and decisions. These include decisions about curfews, household chores, use of the family car, and family activities. By making decisions together, parents teach their teens how to think about choices.

This “democratic” parenting style differs from an “autocratic” one. Autocratic parents make most or all of the decisions. They don’t allow their teens to have a say in making decisions or rules. It also differs from a “permissive” parenting style. Permissive parents have practically no rules. Parents allow their teenagers to make all of the decisions with little or no parental input, guidance, or advice.

- **Give your child freedom a little at a time.**

There are some things that parents can allow their teenagers to decide on their own. These decisions are about clothes and music, when to do schoolwork, and participation in activities such as sports, clubs, and hobbies. Teens usually don’t try to show independence by doing riskier things when their parents let them make day-to-day decisions. Parents who try to manage all areas of their childrens’ lives often have teens who “talk back” and/or misbehave. These teens may take riskier ways to show independence, like driving too fast.

How Well Do You Monitor Your Child?

- Do you know where your child is after school and at night?
- Do you talk with your child about his or her plans with friends?
- Do you ask your child to call if he or she will be coming home later than expected?
- Do you know your child's friends?

Parental Monitoring

We asked teens a number of questions about how well their parents monitored them. Many parents knew their teens' friends, who they were with, where they went at night, and what they were doing after school. However, a number of parents did not know this information, according to their teens.

My parents...	Percentage of Teens Responding "Always" or "A Lot of the Time"
• Ask me where I'm going when I go out	86%
• Expect me to call if I'm going to be home late	85%
• Know who I'm going to be with	78%
• Know where I am when I go out at night	78%
• Know what I'm doing after school	76%
• Know who my friends are	75%
• Know the plans I have with my friends	61%
• Know how I spend my money	55%

• Monitor your child's behavior.

Monitoring your child means knowing where your child is. It also means knowing about his or her activities and friends. Teenagers spend more and more time away from home, often unsupervised. Still, parents must continue to guide and monitor teens to some degree.

Parental monitoring doesn't mean being overly involved in your teenager's life. Teenagers need privacy, independence, and to feel they are trusted. But, it does mean that parents show an active interest in the lives of their children. Parental monitoring can help keep teenagers out of trouble. Studies show parental monitoring is related to lower rates of teenage drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, delinquency, and victimization.

Set Clear and Reasonable Limits ... Be Flexible

Gaining a balance of freedom and control is no small order for parents. Family values, a teen's age and level of maturity, and his or her behavior all make a difference.

• Non-negotiable rules.

Most families have some non-negotiable rules that parents set for their children. These are rules that are very important to parents. They aren't easily changed. Have only a *few* of these rules. They should deal with the child's physical and emotional safety and strongly held family values. For example, "No riding in a car with a driver who has been drinking," and "You must go to school," are non-negotiable rules in most families. Teens sometimes challenge non-negotiable rules. But, they're likely to follow them if parents are willing to calmly explain the reasons.

Teens will respect the non-negotiable rules if they're carefully chosen. There are some non-negotiables that will probably never change. On the other hand, as your teen becomes more mature, some non-negotiable rules may become negotiable. Not talking on the phone after 9:30 may be a firm rule for your 14-year-old. It may be a flexible rule for your high school senior.

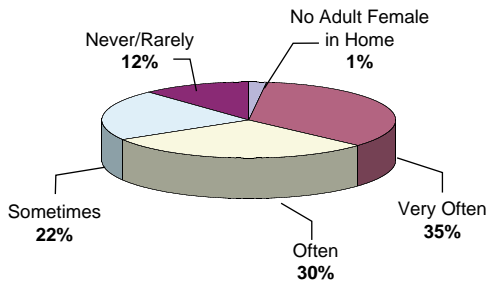
• Negotiable rules.

These are rules that teens and parents make together. Again, they should be changed as a child becomes more mature and responsible. Issues of household responsibilities, curfew, and use of the family car are negotiables. Rules and decisions about these areas should be made by parents and teens together. Take into account the needs of both.

“That’s Not Fair!”

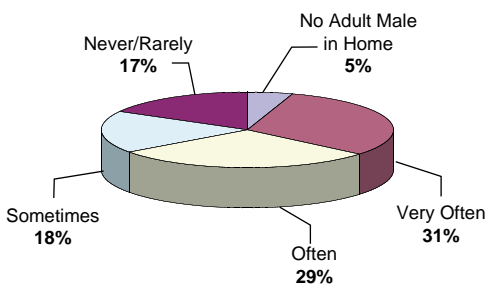
You may hear your teen exclaim, “That’s not fair!” But our survey shows most local teens believe their mothers and fathers “often” or “very often” enforce rules fairly.

“My mother is fair when it comes to enforcing family rules.”



Number Responding 2013

“My father is fair when it comes to enforcing family rules.”



Number Responding 2014

Be Fair With Discipline

If rules and limits are reasonable and fair, teens see the rules as a sign their parents care. But, sometimes teens break rules and limits. When this happens, try not to “blow-up” at your child. It doesn’t do any good to send the message that your teen is a failure. In fact, punishment is not a good way to get your teenager to cooperate and learn for the next time.

- **What should I do if my teen does something wrong?**

One way is to stand back and let your teen suffer the results of his or her behavior. For example, don’t drive your teen to school or work if he/she is late.

- **Share your disappointment and concern.**

A second way is to simply say, “I’m disappointed, and I don’t want this to happen again.” If your teen has a good relationship with you, he or she wants your approval. Your teenager will try to avoid letting you down again. Focus your feelings on the act, not the person. Say, “I’m very angry you did that; it was a dangerous thing to do.” Don’t say, “You are so stupid.”

- **Involve your child in setting rules and consequences or outcomes.**

A third way is to ask your teen what will happen if a rule is broken. Ask teens to think about how others might feel. Often, teens set harsher consequences for themselves than their parents do! When only parents set rules and consequences, teens may feel angry. When teens help set their own rules, they’re less likely to say “unfair!”

- **Be sure the outcome fits the behavior.**

Discuss with your teen why you can’t allow the behavior. Try to work out a consequence or outcome together. Let your teen know what will happen if he or she breaks the rule. But remember, the consequence should be fair and fit the misbehavior. For example, if your teen stays out past curfew again, he’ll be grounded for a week. If your teen doesn’t drive safely, she can’t use the car for two weeks. In some cases, your teen needs to repair the damage. For example, if a lamp is broken in an angry outburst, ask that it be fixed or paid for. Remember to save stiffer consequences for major misbehaviors (like drinking and driving). Use lighter consequences for more minor misbehavior (like staying out a short time beyond curfew).

- **Try to respond in a similar way from one day to the next.**

Don’t enforce a rule one day, then ignore the misbehavior the next day. If you change from day to day, you send a message to your child, “this rule doesn’t really count.”

Continued on page 6

Be Fair With Discipline.....

If you have a spouse or partner, both of you need to enforce the rules. If you and your partner don't agree on a rule, work out your differences in private.

- **Always leave room for change.** Being fair when setting rules and limits means talking about them as your teen changes. He or she develops new abilities and needs, and shows more responsibility. Rules should change as your teen changes.

Books Recommended For Parents

- Brooks, J.B. (1991). **The Process of Parenting.** Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Caron, A.F. (1994). **Strong Mothers Strong Sons: Raising Adolescent Boys In The 90's.** New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Lansky, V. (1989). **Divorce Book For Parents.** New York: NAL Books.
- Elkind, D. (1993). **Parenting Your Teenager In The 90's.** Rosemond, New Jersey: Programs For Education, Inc.
- Bloomfield, H. (1993). **Making Peace In Your Stepfamily.** New York: Hyperion.
- Keshet, J. (1987). **Love And Power In The Stepfamily: A Practical Guide.** New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- Wallerstein, J. & Blakeslee, S. (1989). **Second Chances: Men, Women And Children A Decade After Divorce.** New York: Tickner & Fields.

UNH Cooperative Extension Resources:

- **Publication Series:**
Living with your Teenager
- **Workshop Series:**
Family Focus: Parenting the Adolescent

Helpful Resources

In-School Help

School District Switchboard.....	775-8400
High School.....	775-8402
High School Guidance	775-8417
Middle School	775-8700
Middle School Guidance	775-8706

Abuse

Division for Children, Youth and Families (to report)	1-800-894-5533
after hours helpline:	1-800-852-3388
Safe Place (Domestic Violence)	436-7924
Sexual Assault support Services (SASS)	1-888-747-7070

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

AD Care Hospital	1-800-252-6465
Al-Anon/Alateen	1-877-825-2666
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	1-800-593-3330

Counseling Services

Center for Eating Disorders Management	742-0047
ParentLine	1-800-640-6486

Crisis Hot Lines

24 hr. Crisis Referral Hotline (Drug & Alcohol only)	1-800-888-9383
Boys Town Hotline	1-800-448-3000
TeenLine (confidential, for any problem)	1-800-639-6095
Youth Crisis Hotline (17 years and younger)	1-800-448-4663

Family Planning/Health Services

Birthright (24 hr.)	1-800-550-4900
Portsmouth office	436-5558
Planned Parenthood.....	772-4326

Information and Referral

Info Link	1-888-499-2525
Poison Control Center	1-800-562-8236

Runaway

Child & Family Services of NH Group Home	224-9313
National Runaway Switchboard	1-800-621-4000

Sexual Identity

Seacoast Outright	431-1013
PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) .	1-800-750-2524

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

AIDS Hotline	1-800-752-2437
STD/HIV	594-3355

Suicide and Depression

Exeter Hospital	1-800-443-1119
or	778-7311
Riverbend.....	1-800-852-3323
Seacoast Mental Health (24 hour)	772-2710

UNH Cooperative Extension

Rockingham County, Family and 4-H Youth Development	1-800-248-6672
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Also see the "Self-Help Guide to Human Services in N.H." at the front of your telephone book

This newsletter was based on a publication by Susan Silverberg, University of Wisconsin at Madison. The UNH Cooperative Extension newsletter "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" was edited by Charlotte W. Cross, Extension Specialist, Youth Development and Mary W. Temke, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Human Development, with technical assistance from Carolyn L. Miller, Research Assistant, UNH Cooperative Extension. Desktop publishing provided by UNHCE Educational Marketing & Information Office.

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HealthyCommunities

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SAU-16

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Communities

In coordination with the SAU-16 school district, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service, and **HealthyCommunities** the newsletter "**Whose Kids?... Our Kids**" are distributed to all homes of teens attending grade 6th - 12th in the SAU-16 school district. Copies of the newsletter are also distributed to staff, faculty and administrators of the middle and high school. Each of the elementary school principals receives copies and has the option of distributing the newsletters more widely.

HealthyCommunities is a **community-based** substance abuse **prevention** collaborative targeting teens who live in the 6 towns of the SAU-16 Cooperative School District. **HealthyCommunities** is composed of individuals and groups representing the area schools, parents, youth, clergy, businesses; and recreation and social service agencies that serve youth, and their families.

HealthyCommunities initiatives are partially funded by a three-year state incentive grant; the SAU-16 school district is the fiscal agent for this grant. This current copy of *Whose Kids?... Our Kids!!!!* is the 4th of 6 newsletters, each on a topic of interest to parents of teens:

1. Working Together: Youth, Families, Schools, and Communities
2. Teenagers: Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs
3. Teen Depression and Suicide
4. Parent-Teen Relationships
5. Sexuality
6. Parent-Teen Communication

Each newsletter presents information collected from SAU-16 teens in the Teen Assessment Project Survey administered in October of 1999. Each newsletter provides suggestions and a list of resources to assist parents with teen issues that may arise specifically around the topic highlighted in the newsletter.