

Jon Mattleman's

Top 15 Parenting Tips

#15 Your job is not to be cool or to be their friend. Your job is to be a parent; this means that sometimes you may not be cool in their eyes. It is age and stage appropriate that your kids hate you at times. If and when they do, we have to feel OK about this ---- meaning we may not like it, but we cannot take it personally.

#14 An adolescent's concept of risk is different from ours. Due to their adolescent brain, they do not see the consequences to risk that an adult does. They operate on their social rewards more so than other factors.

#13 Re-think their need for technology 24/7. Technology increases the potential for at-risk behaviors including drinking, drugging, sex, etc. Do they really need a cell phone all the time? Why would they need one while at school?

#12 They may not be ready for making good decisions. We are trying to build their resiliency up so they can deal with complex decisions such as drinking, drugging, etc. That said, no matter how much we work at this they may simply not be able, developmentally, to make good decisions. Are we asking for them to make good choices well before they have the brain development to be able to do so?

11 Think about being home as much as possible. No one ever said on their deathbed that they wished they had spent more time in the office.

10 Do more listening and less talking. What you say is less important than what they say. Not every moment is a teachable moment, but every moment can be a moment to learn more about your child.

9 Put down the distractions. TV, iPhones, Blackberries, computers, tablets etc. Model good electronic behavior.

8 We complicate things. Sometimes our expectations are too high, we want our kids to be different (and all they want to do is be the same), we are constantly giving them feedback and trying to fix things. Create realistic expectations and stop trying to fix things.

7 Have stamina and never give up on your child. In my experience this is perhaps the most critical factor for parents and it almost always translates into healthy relationships with your children in the post-teen years.

6 It is hard being a kid today. Although it is also probably true that our kids have it easier than we did in some ways. I know of virtually no one who would voluntarily return to high school. It is nice to sometimes let your child know that it is tough being a teen.

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5 Only fight about the top 3 issues. Let the other stuff go. In my house, my daughter's room was a disaster, but it was not in my top 3, so I let it go. If you fight about all of the issues, you will be fighting all of the time --- not exactly what we or they want.

4 Get into their world. In fact, the TV show "The Secret Life of An American Teen" was poorly reviewed, yet was the highest viewed show ever on ABC Family as teens flocked to see this. Try watching shows like "The Family Guy" (or other shows your teen watches) with an open mind.

3 Ask other parents for help and advice. You will be amazed at what you will learn. In addition, please seek professional help when needed. Some of the bravest and most caring parents are the ones who know when to access outside assistance.

2 Allow your child to make mistakes. Be glad that they do so when they are in middle and high school, so that you can support them in this learning process.

1 Take them away for a day. Here is what you do. Tell them that you will be showing up at school one day and will tell the main office staff that your child needs to be dismissed and will not be returning for the day. Then do something fun like skiing, go into Boston, or have lunch and see a movie. Do not have an agenda regarding what to talk about, just have fun together.

When you go home tonight, please give your child a hug (if they will allow) and tell them that you have no idea how they handle and balance so much --- and that you are impressed !

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