

# CAREGIVERS HANDOUT ON SUPPORTING TEENAGERS

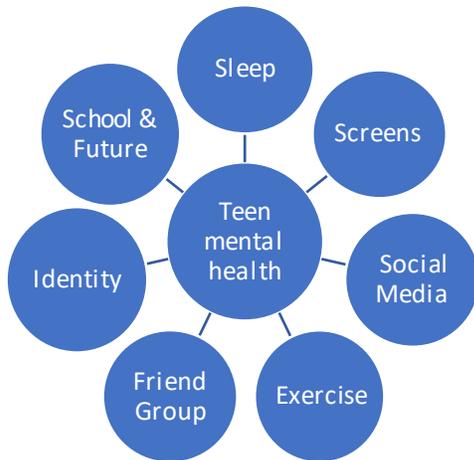
To be used independently or together with the FAST-P Workbook for Caregivers

## QUICK SUMMARY

**What is it SO hard to parent teenagers?** Adolescence is the perfect storm of challenges:

- Wanting independence and not having all the skills to be independent
- Fast-growing abilities and slow-growing self-control
- Making peer relationships #1 and pulling away from family
- Having big dreams and not always taking actions to reach them

Such internal battles, plus hormones, leads to a roller coaster ride



- Invite teen to problem solve together and let them lead a plan to take action.

← **What else is affecting my teen?** Teens struggle to balance healthy behaviors (like sleep and exercise) while finding a place in their complex social world. Many factors affect their behavior and mood each day.

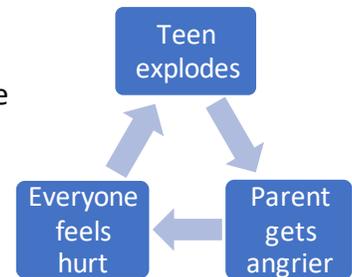
### **As a parent, what can I do?**

Parents cannot have total control over their teen, but they can still have the final say in setting limits. A few communication strategies that can help include:

- Clearly communicate expectations and boundaries
- Listen and reflect the teen’s perspective and feelings, even if you don’t agree
- Don’t try to fix issues while teen is still upset

### **Conflict Cycles: How Teens & Caregivers Shape Each-others’ Behavior**

When teens push limits or explode, parents may feel the need to “win” the power struggle by being even louder, harsher or stricter. Then everyone feels disrespected and communication is harder the next time. When parents listen and show flexibility while calmly holding important limits, teens will come to accept those limits with time (and some grumbling).



### **Are You Falling into Any of These Common Traps with Your Teen?**

- Magnifying:** Focusing on things you don’t like while not giving attention to what your teen is doing well (Ex: “Your homework is always late- it’s the same thing every day!”)
- Fueling the fire:** Getting angry, yelling, and threatening when your teen is already upset will only make it harder for them to calm down.
- Losing the High Ground:** Acting like a teenager yourself when upset by insulting, being sarcastic, name-calling, or saying things you regret later.
- Random Threats:** Taking away too many privileges for too long takes away teen’s motivation to keep trying (Example: Grounding or taking away phone for weeks)
- Lecturing:** If you are repeating the same lectures and explanations constantly, your teen is probably not learning from them.
- Withdrawing:** Feeling so helpless to set limits with your teen that you give up

## COMMON TRAPS QUIZ

**FAST-P CAREGIVER HANDOUT (PAGE 2)**

STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP

**Comment On The Good To See More Of It:** *What does your teen do that you could praise or acknowledge? Comment on 3 good things every day.*

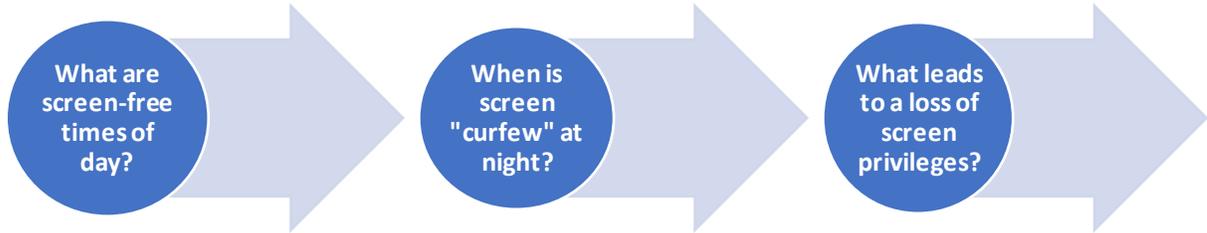
Great things my teen does: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pick Battles:** *Aim for more positive than negative interactions with your teen. This may mean letting go of or ignoring behaviors that are annoying or harmless. Which of the following can you stop reacting to this week?*

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wearing clothes I hate | Complaining                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arguing                | Talking too much about video games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rude tone of voice     | Other: _____                       |

**Set Screen Boundaries:** *Most teens struggle to set healthy limits with screens.*

Consider the following boundaries for your household and discuss them with your teen:



STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP

**Ideas to Try with Your Teen:**

**1 on 1 time:** Set aside one-on-one time with your teen for just 10 minutes per day. Do whatever they want to do or talk about during that time – don’t bring up the past or future, don’t ask lots of questions, don’t give any advice or criticize.

**Link Boring Tasks to Fun Tasks:** Make sure boring tasks (like chores) are done right before the start of something that is naturally rewarding for your teen (like video games)

**Model Respectful Communication:** When your teen is pushing all your buttons, respond as you want them to learn to respond. Use few words and listen carefully as they speak.

**Don’t Forget:**

**Be a “good boss”:** Think of the best boss you’ve had. How did they guide you, give feedback, and make you want to do your best work? Channel positive boss qualities (encouraging, giving independence) and avoid the negative (shaming, hovering)

**Let Your Teen Problem Solve:** You won’t always be able to solve problems for your teen. Invite them to talk together about possible solutions and then make a plan themselves.

**Stick with it!:** Changing patterns take time. Remind yourself: *“The teen years are tough. My teen is still learning. It will take consistency and practice for things to change.”*

*If you need support, or your teen’s behavior is risky or dangerous, ask your primary care provider about finding a local mental health specialist to meet with your family*