

Taking the Best First Steps to Learning What's Important to Your 12th Grader

Communication

- Ask what they're concerned about. Or, what their friends are concerned about (sometimes that's easier.)
 - Conversation starters
 - What's it like to be in senior classes, not freshman classes?
 - Who's been your most annoying teacher?
 - Are you spending more or less time with anyone surprising?
 - Has anyone freaked out about a college decision yet?
 - Share a "parent" confidence
 - I'm not complaining but I feel a bit left out. How can I be useful?
 - All the other parents are doing (). Do you think that's important for you?

Write what happened when you used one of these to have a conversation with your child.



Change Your Problem-Solving Perspective

Try to just listen, take mental notes in case you have an idea but don't solve any problems. You're transitioning from the problem solver to the solution collaborator.

Describe a problem your child feels they need to solve.

(For example, they leave school work at home and then don't get credit for doing it, or they don't feel they have enough friends.)



Remember, they can solve most problems if they have the support to try. Let's face it--it's probably going to take longer. However, the fact is you're very important in your 12th grader's life. Your guidance and support will build their confidence as they learn to solve their own daily problems.

Ask your child what they've done about solving the problem.
Just listen. Write what you learned here:

Then tell them what about their solution is good, and why. If nothing is good then tell them this is an excellent start, and if they add (a general suggestion by you) it will work even better.

If they ask you to talk about what won't work, focus *on the positive*. This is how you'll help them move ahead in the areas of their strengths. If they ask you to take care of it, tell them *you're confident they can figure it out* and you're happy to listen to their ideas.

Write what happened during the conversation, here.



Be Aware of Problem Areas

What are some of those problem areas?

Maybe “how-to do things” and “taking that uncomfortable first step.”

Never assume a 12th grader knows how to communicate with an adult, how to ask for help, prioritize the long daily list of decisions independence brings, or a host of other new challenges--unless they prove to themselves they do.

This is where a how-to can be a helpful tool.

For example: if your 12th grader has a habit of leaving completed school work at home (and then doesn't get credit for doing it or it's discounted for being late) they may also forget other things. When they go to college this will become an even bigger problem because the buffer of high school teachers will be gone. They DON'T need nagging. They DO need a successful strategy.

- What's not working? Not having everything they need for their day.
- Questions they can ask themselves: How can I best go through what I need before I leave my home in the morning? What would my backpack look like if I had everything I needed when I left in the morning? How do I keep track of homework that needs to be done, and homework I've completed?
- Outcome: your child becomes more aware of what they need during the day, and thinks about how to confirm they have it before they leave. They'll be less likely to forget their completed homework.



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