

Ask Dr. Allen:

Six things a parent can do to help their kid succeed

1. Be honest about family rules. Tell them why you are requiring something such as cleaning up or helping with the chores. Have conversations about the importance of joining the family cause - we are all rowing in the boat, we all get an oar.
2. Let them take care of themselves more. Whatever they can do for themselves, let them do it, such as tie their own shoes, pick up used clothes, and clean their room. Include them in managing the family with you. The more we do for them, the weaker they may become and the more they will expect others to do for them what they could do for themselves. Seek to create independent living skills.
3. Have fun together. Do activities that create a bond with the two of you or three or four of you. Playing sports together, going on outings together, playing board games at home are a few essentials. Notice what makes you feel at peace with your kids, what activity or conversational topic? Then do it again and again. What makes you all laugh? What makes you feel like hugging your kid or them wanting to hug you?

Let them interact with others. Often when a kid or teen is with their parents and a question is asked of the kid, such as how is your sport going or do you really like that type of music, the parent answers the question before the kid can answer. That is an example of a parent not letting their kid grow up. It also pushes the kid away and into their own isolated world. So at family gatherings with other families or in situations in public, let your kid interact. Allow them the freedom to be who they are mentally and grow in confidence.
5. Seek to be one step ahead of them in thinking, activities, interactions. Think of how they will be a year or two from now. Lead them in conversations about life, topics, peers, school and other meaningful topics. Ask them what they think about something. They don't have to figure it out on the spot but can ponder the topics for a few days or weeks. Let them explore concepts and viewpoints and the meaning of what is going on in their and our lives and others' lives.
6. Don't forget character. Often parents are so focused on school grades, college applications and other achievements that we forget what's most important. That is the character of our kids. The most important thing is that they have integrity, are trustworthy and honest. If they do that, they'll do well in school and in life. Employers and partners are looking for people they can trust and who work together well with others. Remember to keep them in a place of humility and service to others.

Dr. Greg Allen is a licensed therapist practicing in Palos Verdes and San Pedro. He is also Director of Freedom4U (freedomcommunity.com) and Hearts Respond (heartsrespond.com). Pen