

50 Things Parents Do

TO IMPACT THEIR TEENS

At Catalyst Teen Center we have the benefit of working with many parents who have maintained incredible relationships with their children throughout their teenage years. Nothing about parenting comes easy and all of it requires hard work.

We surveyed these parents and asked for their ideas on what were some of the most impactful things they did to remain a close influence in their son or daughters life.

As parents, we often beat ourselves up over the stuff we get wrong and do not give ourselves enough credit for the things we get right. So here is a list that we hope will encourage you to keep going and inspire you to try something new.

The following is in now specific order.

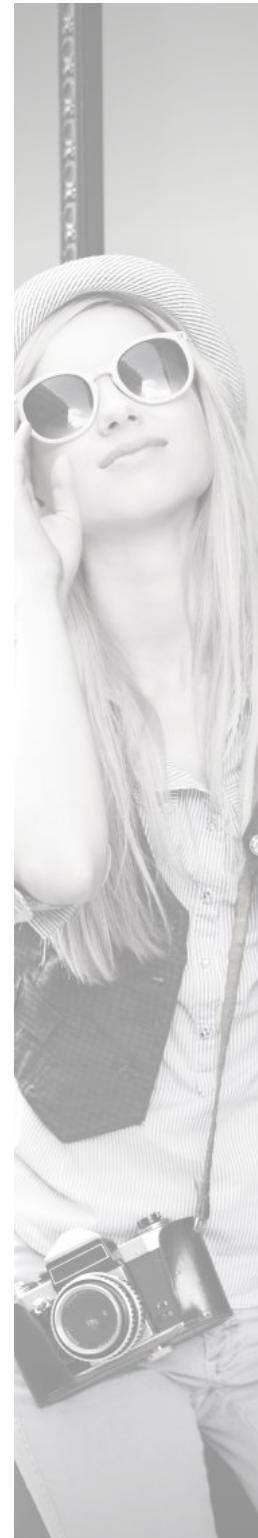
#1 I cook with my kids, not because they are passionate about it, but because it brings up great discussions, and it is a life skill they will eventually need to learn. It makes us laugh together, and it has even made us fail together. It's hard, and easy, but it is important to life to know it won't always be easy or hard or a win or fail.



#2 Shopping. I hate shopping, but how will my child know life isn't full of money if we don't help them hands on. Shopping creates communication, some tears, and often laughter. Clothes shopping creates communication on what is or isn't appropriate to wear, and the why is this inappropriate or appropriate, how does someone else actually see you, and it can and should create confidence in the way they look. My child is allowed to agree and disagree, with my choices, and fight for hers.

#3 My teens are allowed to say "I hate you". Let's face it life is full of feelings, my house is a safe place to express yourself, even if it is screaming at the top of her lungs how much she hates me, all feelings even if they are stupid or hurtful, are valid in that moment. After the outburst, we communicate in a much calmer way, and to date, every angry situation, or tearful one has gotten better. I use each situation as a tool to help them think about a better more appropriate way of resolving the situation in the future. I approach everything as if she was an adult, and how would that have impacted her job, or relationship as an adult.

#4 I watch TV with them. My child loves drama and music- I watch TV with her. Her choice is The Voice- I am sharing a passion with her creating a bond that says she matters. We discuss the good and bad things that are said or worn. We discuss dreams, and fantasies, and how she can truly make it happen if she wants to be an actress or singer. It brings up our values, and most of all we usually laugh!



#5 Birthdays. In my house my teens birthday is important. Life is full of a bunch of crap always telling us we aren't worth it. I feel they should have one day a year to know how special I think they are. The day my children were born was giant for me, and I want them to know it. It isn't about how much I spend on them, I cook, so my kids get usually a homemade card and special birthday dinner. Others I understand can't do that, but there is no excuse for not leaving a sticky note or saying I love you happy to have you in my life!

#6 I say I love you. I often show love, but after having kids, I realized the words matter.

#7 I say I am sorry. I am human, and to teach a child to apologize is pointless, unless you too can say I was wrong and why. We all can flip off an "I am sorry", but that means nothing without the why or what we did wrong.

#8 I say No. We live in a very busy world with very entitled kids. As a parent first, it is my job to see if my child needs rest, or if they are sick, children need to hear no sometimes. I explain or communicate the why's most of the time. I say no due to money or friends I don't think will be good to hang out with. I make my teen think, but my job, is still to protect.

#9 We let our teen fail. Not all the time, but when it's a situation that is safe, but he can learn lesson from it.

#10 I fail and pull myself up. Sometimes it isn't about doing anything at all with your teen, it is showing that life is full of ups and downs and how you get through them. I am a parent who has failed, and I admit it, then I show and speak about how to fix it.

#11 I check in before bed! It is often a 5-minute conversation- but then it can last an hour depending on what is actually going on.

#12 I wrote my son a letter when he was 15. Told him how proud I was about the man he was becoming. Told him my hopes for his future and gave him some direction on how to achieve his goals. Told him of my failures and things that I regretted. I just thought if my dad had done that for me, I would still refer to that letter today.

#13 His mom and I are a team and he knows it. We chose each other...we didn't choose him (LOL!). Neither one of us sneaks around the other's back and gives our teen a break. If one of us says "no", the answer is "no". If one of us says "yes", the answer is "yes".

#14 We argue / fight in front of them. My parents didn't. When I got married, I was unprepared for the battles that would ensue. He's learned a lot from watching us fight – recover – and keep moving forward.

#15 We always tell the truth - and expected the same.

#16 We always allow for discussion - but make the final decision.

#17 Maintained family friendships with trusted adults that could be a positive influence or liaison.

#18 Talked about God - His Word & His Will ... That was our plumb line.

#19 Established & enforced consistent expectations and consequences ... Even if we were tired, busy or would suffer as well.

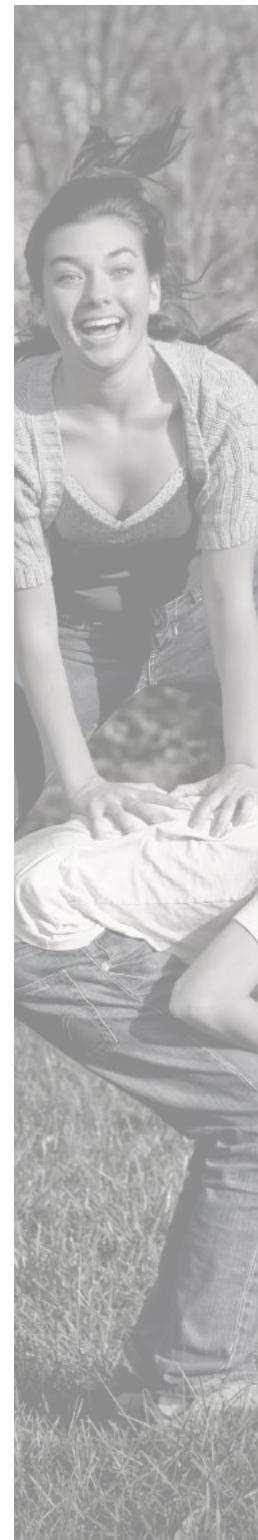
#20 Sometimes have mercy when justice is due.

#21 Communicated with Teachers - and supported their decisions and expectations.

#22 Set up routines & responsibilities - every member of the family was expected to work together.

#23 Help find them intern positions and volunteer opportunities to help them see if they really "want" to pursue a certain career path.

#24 Take them to do service work like feed the homeless, or clean up trash.





#25 Allowing them to come up with their own ideas to serve the community and helping them follow through with it like baking bread and then passing it out on Sundays to the homeless.

#26 Taking "Staycations" at local hotels to let the kids enjoy the pool and all you can eat breakfast and happy hour snacks when big family vacations just weren't in the budget.

#27 Having a weekly family meeting to give everyone a chance to be heard and given an opportunity to share something important from their week, ending with each person giving a simple but sincere compliment or thanking a family member for something nice they did throughout the week. (Thank you for waking me up on Tuesday I forgot to set my alarm I would have missed the bus. I appreciate that you did that for me.)

#28 When my kids start fighting with each other I have them 'hug' it out until they start laughing.

#29 Family nights where the family gets together, eat, share a scripture or two, and then play games or do something they can enjoy together.

#30 Have bold and courageous conversations about the values our youth are questioning such as sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, etc.

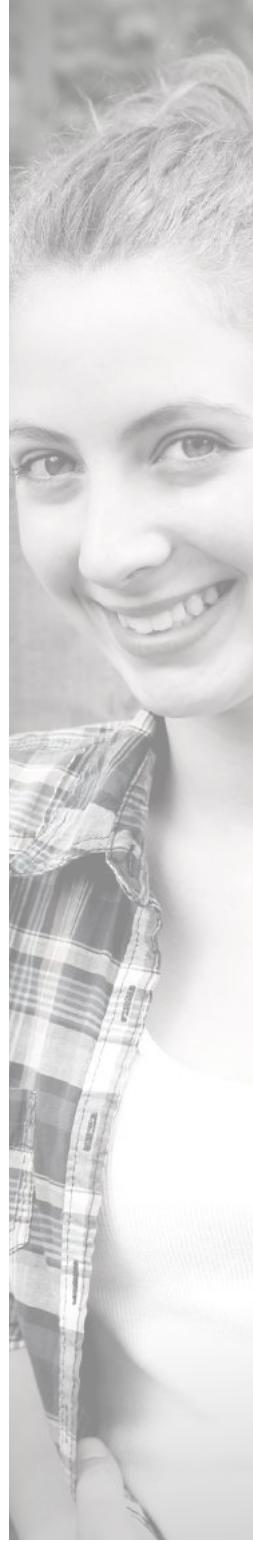
#31 Be vigilantly aware of my teens involvement with social media, friends, and family

#32 See your teens through Creator God's eyes. Give them grace, unconditional love and mercy just like Christ gives us. Meet them where they are, have empathy for what they are feeling and experiencing not sympathy. There is a huge difference. Find a promise from God, a scripture to claim and pray for them throughout their lives. A great one is Joshua 1:9

#33 When anger takes over give a cooling off, time out, for both of you. Take 10 minutes and meet them in a neutral room/outside on the patio, and bring their favorite snack similar to a love offering. We used chips and hot sauce a few times. Really listen to them, hear their heart and meet them half way. Resolve the issue as soon as possible.

#34 Read Parenting Teens with Love and Logic by Cline and Fay. There are lots of great ideas in this book. They also have one for children, we used both of them.

#35 We have a family worship night on Sunday evenings to model to them that we want to always keep the Sabbath Day Holy. If our children/teens do not respect and honor their parents it will be difficult for them to respect and honor God. Every week we let the Holy Spirit lead us and tried to be creative. We would sing worship songs, read from the Bible, study a certain book of the Bible together and more.



#36 Keep a prayer journal and write down what each family member needs prayer for. Take time to write a praise when a prayer request is answered. Then hold hands and pray for the person on your right. This way the girls had to pray for one another and us weekly.

#37 Be intentional on long road trips, family vacations and have music, CD's, and movies to listen/watch and discuss them. Compare and contrast together what you liked and didn't like.

#38 My teens feel that my support in their interests, hobbies, passions whether I understood or even agreed with them has been so important to them. One of the best examples is my daughters decided to go Vegan and it requires me to shop and cook differently for them and it means a lot to them that I support them. Having support even in the small stuff is comforting.

#39 Showing interest in their life on a daily basis. I always ask how their day was or if they attended an event ask about it but knowing when to stop. Showing interest, not interrogating. This shows them that they matter and also opens the doors to communication.

#40 They like when I'm silly or just plain weird really just having fun. My daughter always says that I'm weird but in a good way! Embrace your inner child and have a blast! It is important to know when to act like this and when not to!

#41 Be willing to listen to their music. It's fun to belt it out with them too! Watch movies or shows with them even if it's not something you would choose to watch yourself.

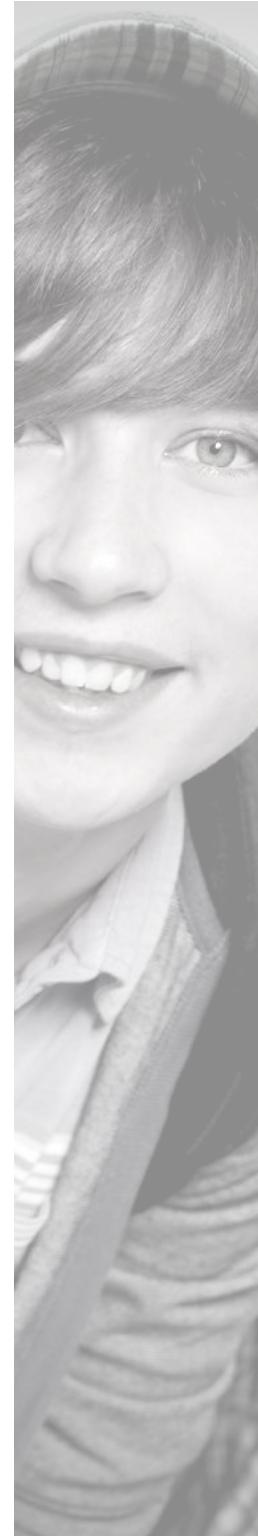
#42 Speak words of encouragement into them often.

Build them up and refrain from labeling them. They are not their behavior but may become it if we expect nothing else from them.

#43 Allow them to express themselves within reason of course. If they want a weird haircut or color let them it will grow back. Let them pick how they dress as long as it's not sexually inappropriate or has offensive labels. I have even allowed a few piercings but did put a limit on how many and where. I would rather they experiment with this stuff under my roof and not in secret so they can be real with me.

#44 Make sure to model what you preach otherwise your words really will mean nothing. Be an example of grace, forgiveness, love, respectfulness and yes even discipline with yourself, others and your kids.

#45 Be their biggest cheerleader! Show up to their performances and games even if it's in an area where you really have no interest. It's important to them so it should be important to you.



#46 Encourage and love on their friends, even if they are not your favorites. Teens care so much about what their friends think. When you intentionally encourage their friends and they respond with “dude your parents are cool”, you just earned even more street cred (respect) in the eyes of your teen.

#47 Capture great moments on social media. Nobody uses photo albums any more so be intentional about capturing moments with your teen and posting them on your account and theirs. It's planting seeds of love in their long term memory when you do it.

#48 Invest in yourself as a parent. We have 3 kids and each one of them requires a slightly different parenting style. We have to make sure that we are learning from those who have been before us and experimenting with different approaches to connect and lead our teens. There are a ton of resources for free online. Even watching a few 3 minute, YouTube videos on parenting per month will go a long way!

#49 Host events at your house for your teens. This could be a study group, movie night, or any reason your teen could use to invite friends over. Be the best host you can be when it happens.

#50 Take your teen to work with you. It may not be exciting for them but it will give them a glimpse into your world and explain why you might come home in a bad mood!