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still make the difference!
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Relating facts to something meaningful improves recall

Brain research sheds light on how memory works. And that can make test time a little easier for your teen.

Working harder does not always mean working better. Memorization is a case in point. Teens often memorize by repeating something over and over. But a brain study says there's a better way to retain information.

Repetition can help with short-term memory. But long-term memory is what your teen needs to call up a fact on a test. Researchers found that the best way to store a fact long term is to relate it to other facts already stored in her brain.

To make facts more meaningful, encourage your teen to:

- **Make a mental picture.** The Spanish word for *narrow* is *estrecho*. Have her think of the word stretched out until it is very thin. The sillier the picture, the easier it may be to remember.
- **Link them to something** she already knows. Which spelling (*stationary* or *stationery*) means paper? "*Stationery* uses envelopes."
- **Use rhymes.** Does she remember "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred ninety-two"? Then she knows the power of a rhyme.
- **Create a sentence.** "I shouldn't battle again." The number of letters in each word correlates to the year the Civil War ended: 1865.

Spending time creating these memory links will help your teen study smarter and remember more.

Source: "Long-Term Memories Made with Meaningful Information," Science Daily, niswc.com/high_memory.

Show your teen how to manage test anxiety



Whether they are preparing for driver's tests or college entrance exams, high school students have to learn how to perform well under pressure.

To help your teen keep test stress under control:

- **Put things into perspective.** Remind your teen that tests are just a part of life. He should always do his best, but also realize that a test merely reflects what happened on one day in his life. If your teen does poorly on a test, that doesn't mean he is a failure.
- **Share relaxation strategies.** Teach your teen to tense and then relax his muscles. He should start by tightening his toes, counting to three, and then relaxing them. He should do the same with his legs, arms, shoulders and neck. After doing this, your teen should feel more relaxed.
- **Teach visualization.** Athletes practice "seeing" themselves winning the game. Help your teen do the same, and picture himself going into the test feeling confident and prepared.

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Talk to your high schooler about making difficult decisions



Sometimes, it's easy to do the right thing. If everyone is driving safely down a road, there's less temptation for your teen to speed.

However, there are other times when it's not so easy to do the right thing. Your teen is taking an online test and a friend texts her and asks for the answer to one of the questions. Does your teen send the answer to her friend?

It's during those hard times when it's even more important for your teen to be prepared to do the right thing. Sometimes, the choices involved may seem unimportant, such as whether to get up when the alarm clock beeps or roll over and miss a class. But even these minor choices can have big consequences. If she misses class today, it will be that much harder to catch up tomorrow.

Talk with your teen about these hard moments. Let her know that everyone has to make choices. Often, by choosing the option that seems harder at the time (getting up and logging into class), she will actually have an easier time in the future.

Source: S. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Fireside Books.

"It is very important to know who you are. To make decisions. To show who you are."

—Malala Yousafzai

Research reveals the importance of having a success mindset



The music teacher handed out a difficult new piece. But your teen wasn't worried. "I'll just practice until I get it."

Then later, his math teacher introduced a new math skill. Your teen rolled his eyes. "I can't learn this," he said. "I'm no good in math."

The truth is that the same strategy your teen learns to master his music is the one that will help him learn the difficult math problems. But many students do not see the connection between practice and results in the classroom.

Researchers at Stanford conducted a study on motivation. They divided students into two groups. They praised one group for their *ability* ("You must be smart to get that right"). They praised the other group for their *effort* ("You really worked hard to figure that out").

Over time, students in the group praised for their ability backed off a challenge. But the teens praised for their work effort said, "Bring it on."

How do you see school success? Do you believe your teen can learn anything if he works at it? That is what researchers now call the "success mindset." It's critical to helping students stay motivated to face—and overcome—challenges.

Thomas Edison once said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Turns out that he was exactly right!

Source: B. Goodwin, *Changing the Odds for Student Success: What Matters Most*, Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.

Are you helping your teen face school challenges?



About this time of the school year, some teens find themselves having difficulty in one class—or in several. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are doing all you can to help if your teen is struggling:

___**1. Have you talked** with your teen about his progress in his classes and listened to his concerns?

___**2. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to his teachers about getting extra help?

___**3. Have you contacted** your teen's teachers to develop a plan to get him back on track?

___**4. Are you working** to get your teen study support through a tutor or a school-recommended program?

___**5. Have you helped** your teen develop study skills—sticking to a regular study time, establishing daily and long-term study goals, taking effective notes?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are doing what it takes to get your struggling teen back on track. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea.

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Challenge your teenager to brush up on geography



Social media and the internet allow your teen to connect with people and research information from all over the world.

That's one reason geography—often misinterpreted by kids as something involving dusty maps—is still important. Geography is about knowing where places are, why they're there and why they matter. And just because a teen is chatting with a friend in Colombia, it doesn't mean he realizes his friend is in South America, not Columbia, South Carolina.

To boost your teen's geography skills, challenge him to:

- **Use a subway map,** bus or train schedule and a city map to plan a future trip to a point of interest.
- **Use a topographic map** to lay out a hike through the countryside or your community. He should note the elevation, distance, direction and geographic features along the route.
- **Explore his social network.** He can use a map to determine which of his friends lives the closest. Who is the farthest away?
- **Eat "around the world."** He can try ethnic foods and then locate their countries of origin on a map. Have him investigate why some cultures use forks and others use chopsticks—or no utensils at all.

Every college-bound student should find out four things



Applying to college can be pretty stressful. Schools have different requirements and students have different strengths. Figuring out how to find schools that fit can seem overwhelming to teens—particularly this year.

The U.S. Department of Education has collected information on every college in the United States. Their College Scorecard (*collegescorecard.ed.gov*) makes it easy to learn four key things that every college-bound student should know:

1. **Can I get in?** While some schools are not requiring entrance exams this year due to the pandemic, the Scorecard shows students the range of average SAT and ACT scores for admitted students. Your teen can compare her scores to these.
2. **What fields of study are offered?** The Scorecard allows students to sort the top fields of study by program size and earning potential.
3. **How many students graduate?** It's important to note that some schools have a higher graduation rate than others. Other things being equal, your teen should choose the school where more students finish.
4. **What's the cost** and how much debt does a typical student leave with? Families worry about the cost of tuition and whether or not their teen will graduate with a lot of debt. You may be surprised to learn that some seemingly expensive schools can actually wind up costing less. That's because they offer programs that help eligible students graduate with very little debt. Don't rule out a college until you check these figures.

The Scorecard is not the only tool students should use. But it can help your teen learn important things about a college before she applies.

Q: My daughter and I used to be very close. But in the last few months, I feel like she has become a stranger. She rolls her eyes when I ask her about school or anything else. I want to remain involved, but she barely talks to me. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: You are smart to want to stay involved in your daughter's life. Experts agree that parent engagement has a positive effect on teens' overall happiness and school success. But there is no need to panic.

Your daughter is going through a normal phase. And she's been through a similar phase before. Remember when she was a toddler? Back then she shouted *no* and threw tantrums. Now she rolls her eyes.

It's the same basic behavior. And the things you did when your child was a toddler will, with some adjusting, work now as well:

- **Don't take it personally.** Your teen is trying to carve out a new, independent life. And while she still knows that she needs you, she's not about to admit it. So ignore as much as you can. Stay calm. Don't respond to anger with anger.
- **Set limits.** Family rules still apply—she can't insult you and she can't yell. She has to be respectful. If she can't do that, tell her you aren't going to listen to what she has to say.
- **Let her know** that you will always be on her side. If you were close before, chances are you'll be close again. Unless you suspect something is seriously wrong, for now, let her find her own way—because sooner or later, that way will bring her back.

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It Matters: Building Character

Make community service a priority for your family



The pandemic has brought about lots of uncertainty for families. It has also created opportunities for teens to give back and make a difference.

When teens donate their time and talents, they aren't just making their communities better—they are also doing something for themselves. Studies show that kids involved in community service are less likely to smoke, drink or do drugs. In addition, teens who volunteer tend to earn better grades, improve social skills and develop leadership skills that will help them throughout life.

Families who volunteer together also see real benefits. They get to spend time together—working toward a shared goal. They see each other in new ways. (Who knew that Taylor would be so good at sewing masks? Who knew that Dad could speak Spanish so well?)

Here are some tips to help your family get started volunteering together:

- **Take an inventory.** Are family members already volunteering in the community? Is it possible for other family members to join in?
- **Brainstorm.** What other causes do you care about? Politics, race relations, the environment? What organizations benefit those causes?
- **Start small.** Choose a one-time activity. If you like it, make plans to return. For opportunities in your area, visit *volunteermatch.org*.

Source: J. Segal, Ph.D. and L., "Volunteering and its Surprising Benefits," HelpGuide.org, niswc.com/high_service3.

Encourage your teenager to develop a solid work ethic

A *work ethic* is a set of values and beliefs that include traits such as reliability, dedication and pride in one's work. Having a strong work ethic is not only necessary for success in the workforce—it is necessary for success in school, too.

To promote a strong work ethic in your teen:

- **Be a role model.** Display a positive attitude about work and show your teen that you take your job and your responsibilities seriously. Demonstrate persistence when things get tough.
- **Give your teen responsibilities,** and expect him to fulfill them. Allow him to take responsibility for his actions. For example, if he misses a deadline for a school assignment, don't write an excuse to the teacher. It's your teen's responsibility to talk with the teacher and find a solution.



- **Reinforce delayed gratification.** Remind your teen that he should always work before he plays. Encourage him to finish the first draft of his paper *before* he logs in to play video games with his friends.

Suggest your high schooler focus on three daily goals



Teens tend to think that the whole world is focused on them. Here's a simple exercise that can help your teen shift her focus and also think about other people's needs:

Ask your teen to spend a few minutes every morning setting three simple goals for the day. Have her think of them as the Three S's:

1. **School.** What is the most important thing your teen can do that day for school? It might be to finish writing her paper or to talk to her teacher about an assignment.
2. **Self.** What's the healthiest thing your teen can do for herself that day? Could she go to bed earlier? Schedule 30 minutes to exercise? Reduce her screen time?
3. **Someone else.** Now have your teen think about another person. What could she do to help someone else that day? Could she reach out to a new student? Could she run errands for an elderly neighbor?