How Family Environment Influences Teens

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After years of hearing how much I should dread the teen years, what a wonderful surprise it was when I found that living with teenagers could actually be not just a pleasant experience, but a fulfilling and wonderful adventure.

According to a recent study, there are plenty of parents who enjoy their teens. In a national sample of mothers and fathers, more than three-quarters of parents reported having a very close relationship with their adolescent children. Their teens seem to agree, as an overwhelming majority of teens reported being able to talk to their mothers about things that really bother them. The teens studied found it more difficult to talk to their fathers, yet about 50% were still able to do so (Aufseeser, Jekielek, & Brown, 2006).

According to the research, family structure also makes a difference. Teens with two biological parents living at home were among the largest group reporting very close relationships with their parents, at 82%. The numbers drop, but remain healthy, with 78% reporting very close relationships with their single mothers, and 72% are close to one biological parent and one stepparent. Other family factors influence their adolescent well-being, including parental health behaviors. For example, parents who don't smoke are less likely to have teens that smoke, and parents who exercise are more likely to have active teens as well (Aufseeser, Jekielek, & Brown, 2006). This research serves as an additional reminder that parents and families are important to the healthy development of teens.

1. This document is FAR1218, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 524. Published on EDIS March 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

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References