

Effective Parenting in the Preadolescent Years¹

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We often hear mothers of young children, who choose to stay at home with their babies, say that they'll go back to work when the kids get older. I did it backwards. When my children began to reach adolescence, I told my boss I was going home as I thought my children were at the age where they wanted me less, but needed me more.

As they started to become more independent, I could see that they needed my love and attention just as much as when they were younger. As it turns out, research is showing my hunch was right.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Parents often become less involved in the lives of their children as they enter the middle grades" (DOE, 2005, p. 10). However, research shows that effective parents continue to build their relationship with their preadolescent, even as she or he grows and changes.

During this time, effective parents show love by spending time with their young teen, talking, and listening, and showing a genuine interest in them. These parents try to understand their child's point of view and feelings. Effective parents also set clear limits that are right for the child's age, so their children stay safe, yet have some independence and freedom. Also, they help their growing children learn responsibility by completing household chores, finishing their homework on time, and helping others.

1. This document is FAR1216, 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 509. Published on EDIS July 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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Not all young adolescents are difficult and rebellious. They vary “as much as do children in any other age group.” During early adolescence, as children are growing and changing, they’re also looking to their parents for a strong and caring relationship and guidance.

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/509.mp3

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Reference

U. S. Department of Education (DOE). (2005). Helping your child through early adolescence. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/adolescence/adolescence.pdf> [12 April 2012].