

## How do I help my child make good decisions?



Encourage responsibility and independence in your child. As children get older, parents must continue to give them additional responsibilities. By the time your child reaches middle school, he/she should be able to make good decisions about schoolwork, for example. At this point, it is your child's responsibility to keep track of assignments, homework, and test dates. It is important that parents do not take on this responsibility or others like it for their child because it can lead to laziness and an unhealthy reliance on parental involvement. If you find out from teachers that your child is not completing his/her homework, for example, sit down with him/her and discuss why that choice was made over another. Communicate openly and help him/her to see the consequences of the choices he/she makes. Talk about how his/her decisions over time will affect and perhaps limit future opportunities. Help him/her to understand that all decisions have consequences.

As your child gets older, it is more important than ever to talk to him/her regularly. Communicating often will keep you up-to-date on what is happening in your child's life. Time spent talking openly will allow you to see what kinds of decisions your child is making from day to day. Compliment him/her when thoughtful decisions are made and make a point to also talk about what can happen when bad decisions are made. Try to use examples that your child can understand and relate to, like those involving his/her friends or other family members. Making mistakes at times is a part of the learning process, but with a parent's support and thoughtful guidance, a child will grow to truly understand the value of good decisions.