

How Family Environment Influences Teens¹

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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.

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/524.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/524.wav

References

Aufseeser, D., Jekielek, S., and Brown, B. (2006). The family environment and adolescent well-being: exposure to positive and negative family influences. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends; and San Francisco, CA: National Adolescent Health Information Center, University of California, San Francisco.