



Rabbit Ears



Thoughtful Parenting: Creating a peaceful holiday season for you and your teen

Michelle R. Raz/For the Steamboat Today

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As students get excited for the holidays and receive an academic break from schooling, it can be a time that adds stress to the family household. Elementary students are exploding with timeless energy while anticipating the events of the season. High school and college students are studying frantically for their final exams. Parents are preoccupied with navigating their holiday to-do lists. The combination of a long to-do list, excitement of the season and academic stress can affect the family relationship, possibly in a negative way.

During the holidays with setting some time aside to talk about important issues that will help create a peaceful holiday for many high school and returning college students. It will be a time they feel a justified freedom from the responsibilities of school and routines. Parents can use this as a time to be extra vigilant with their children around the household. This can lead to a positive holiday season.

This weekly column about parenting issues is written by area youth-serving professionals. It publishes on Mondays in the Steamboat Today. Read more columns [here](#).

By taking some time to sit down with your high school or college student to go over family rules and routines, you can create the environment you desire during the holiday break and guide your teen to grow independently.

Some of the published issues many parents have with teens center around curfews, sleep and chores. This season, try to involve them in re-establishing and/or creating the expectations during this time off from their academic obligations. It is important for parents to give some of the responsibility of creating rules, consequences and privileges to their teen to promote

their newly acquired independence.

Learning how to discipline oneself is an important skill your teen will need that can be taught only through experience. For example, continue to expect your teen to take responsibility for chores around the house when returning from college. A way

to engage your teen might be talking about how everyone who lives in a home is responsible for maintaining that home, and therefore, everyone has chores, even those who have busy schedules. Ask for their input.

Here are some good points I have gathered to help when addressing the rules and routines:

1. A key for parents is to use your “active listening skills.”
2. Identify what your goals are: curfew time, chores, etc.
3. Create and discuss possible scenarios with your teen, such as: “A movie goes past curfew and you have a family car,” so what are your choices? Some may be to go home on time, decide to be late, call to explain, etc.
4. Evaluate the decision consequences: get grounded, car taken away, get to stay out later, etc.

Here is a great reminder for teens in concluding these discussions: Freedom equals responsibility. Explain that responsibility is important in your family relationship, at school, at work and in relationships. It helps to prove your dependability and reliability and will earn you trust and privileges.

Research shows that youth problems are less likely to occur when parents communicate clearly and provide consequences for inappropriate behaviors. In addition, clear communication and active listening strengthen the bond between parent and teen.

Help your teen handle the stress of these lifetime changes and adjustments by building their confidence with reminders of their life skills and abilities in addition to listening to their ideas while allowing them to make their own expectations during the holidays. The outcome may be a positive experience, letting your teen know they have your trust, love and support. Keeping an open line of communication and having some give and take when it comes to setting up the rules will help create a peaceful holiday season.

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