



Survival Guide for Parents: Freshman Year

- When you've reminded them for the 6th time to take out the garbage or do their homework and you get the "blank stare," don't take it personally—remember their brains are busy pruning unneeded connections and incorporating new neural patterns. Repetition is normal and okay (its just annoying for you...so talk to another adult about how hard it is to parent a teenager).
- Anything your child CAN do for him/herself, let them do. If you rush in to do too much for them, you will be giving them the message that they are not capable. This is exactly the message you want to *not* give them, because they're all ready feeling less capable since leaving middle school. Now is the time to lend them your belief in them.
- Bring them more into the decision-making process in the family, without giving them too much power or the message that they are too responsible when things go wrong.
- Teach and model stress management: a) be available for questions and venting; b) model and teach pacing and listening to their bodies and inner voice for when to rest and when to push; c) getting good food and adequate sleep during and before "long hauls"; d) having people you love (friends, family) close to you while you're working hard; e) taking time out to refresh yourself.
- Don't tell them to relax, show them. Don't tell them to manage their time better, let them see you doing it. Make them want to hire your stress-management and organizational consulting services because you're really good at it.
- Drive car pools or to sports practices; your son/daughter and their friends will let you know what's going on in their lives so that if something goes wrong or they really need your help, you're already "up to speed."
- Try to take most everything they say seriously. If they express worry or concern over something that seems trivial, it might be trivial to you but not to them. Youth this age are particularly subject to feeling ashamed. When people are ashamed, they either attack themselves or attack another (either lash out and criticize or push away OR they withdraw and tell themselves they're stupid and no good). *Whenever possible, let them choose the time and place for conversation.*
- Realize you've been fired as the *manager* of all aspects of their life and try to stay connected to them as a trusted *consultant*
- Try to ask them more questions about who they think they are, rather than trying to tell them things to say, do or be. **No "Big" talks; have lots of short, little talks about hard subjects.**

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