



TALK LINE
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Tips for Dealing With Your Teen's Risk-Taking



Why Teens Take Risks:

- Risk-taking is part of growing up and becoming independent. It's a way for teens to develop their own identities.
- Healthy risk-taking (participation in sports, making new friends, running for school office, exploring new creative outlets, *etc.*) has a positive impact on development and should be supported.
- Teen desire to be accepted by their peers can encourage both healthy and unhealthy risk-taking.
- Teen brain development may contribute to risk-taking behavior.

Ways to Reduce Unhealthy Risk-Taking:

- Encourage healthy risk-taking.
- Help your teen learn how to evaluate risks, anticipate the consequences of his/her choices, and develop strategies for engaging in healthier behavior when necessary. Talk about other people's behavior and its consequences.
- Keep the lines of communication open, and talk about your values.
- Make limits and expectations clear.
- Try to know where your teen is and who his/her friends are.
- Provide your teen with a way out when there is peer pressure, *i.e.*, give your teen a code word to text you if he/she wants to be picked up from a party.
- Watch for signs of unhealthy or dangerous risk-taking:
 - Red flags might include (i) psychological issues like serious depression or anxiety, (ii) problems at school, (iii) illegal behavior, and (iv) multiple unhealthy risk-taking behaviors.
 - More subtle clues might come through in what teens say about the behavior of friends and family.
- Model good risk-taking patterns. Your teen is watching and imitating you.

Thanks to:

Lynn E. Ponton, M.D.
*The Romance of Risk;
Why Teenagers Do the
Things They Do.* (Basic
Books, 1997) and [Raising
Children Network](#)