



Synithia Williams
Regional Extension Agent, FACD
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2006 Parent Check List

It's 2006; do you know where your child is? If this sounds familiar, you probably recall the popular public service announcements that once aired on commercials promptly at times such as six and ten o'clock. These and similar tactics were aimed at encouraging consciousness among parents regarding the importance of being aware of their children's whereabouts as well as related actions and matters. Current statistics and trends continues to beg the question of whether parents are as connected or "in the know" with their kids as may be perceived.

A recent Who's Who Special Report entitled "What Parents of Top Teens Don't Know About Their Kids" shined a light on discrepancies that existed among parents of high achieving students and their children. When asked about contemplation of suicide, 9% of parents indicated it was a possibility of their child, while 26% of survey children indicated they had. Other findings revealed regarding the topic of

HAD SEX? 9% [Parent Responses], 19% [Child Responses]
CHEATED? 37% [Parent Responses], 76% [Child Responses]
HAS FRIENDS WITH DRUG PROBLEMS? 12% [Parent Responses], 36% [Child Responses]
DRIVES DRUNK? 3% [Parent Responses], (10%) [Child Responses]
WORRIES ABOUT PREGNANCY? 22% [Parent Responses], 46% [Child Responses].

A few notions that may need to be thrown away or at least re-evaluated when parenting are

- Smart, polite, or articulate kids are not susceptible to problems signature to their age group;
- Discipline (in any form) is unhealthy and/or damaging;
- Communicating with children during teenage years is not worth the effort.

Many parents may agree that parenting can be as rewarding as it can be difficult. Finding a balance in which efforts best bring about a healthy child as well as a healthy child-parent relationship can definitely be a challenging feat. However, parenting can feel most defeating when there is no or a weakening in the all too important bridge that exists between parents and children. The following is a parent check list of tips that may help

parents to stay better connected to their children (courtesy of Extension specialists and Parents Matter):

- Be a sounding board. Make it clear that you are willing to listen
- Use everyday family activities to stay close; Making dinner, running errands and taking a walk can all be turned into quality family time.
- Build in extra time to “check-in” at bedtime. Do not assume your child has outgrown this important bedtime ritual.
- Use notes and bulletin boards among other methods to communicate with each other.
- Get to know your children’s friends and their families.
- Stay involved with your child’s school.
- Know what your kids are watching, reading, and listening to.
- Talk with your children early and often about the pressures of growing up and the risks they may encounter: sex, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and violence.
- Encourage your teens to get involved in fun, safe, fulfilling activities.
- Watch for signs that your teenager needs help.

For more information on this or related topics, contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at (205) 338- 9416 or email at willisl@aces.edu.

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