

Suggested Strategies to Support Teen Behavior

Purpose

If your teen is seeking attention

If your teen wants items or activities

If your teen is trying to avoid/delay situations

If your teen enjoys the behavior itself

Being Proactive

Encourage and support interaction with peers and adults who are positive influences; listen, converse, praise, and spend 1:1 time with teen regularly

Establish expectations to obtain and timelines for preferred items activities (e.g., money, electronics, transportation); warn when access will be discontinued

Offer choices; allow teen to arrange environment and schedule (i.e., what, when, where, how); provide down-time and breaks

Keep teen engaged in appropriate activities (e.g., clubs, sports), and decrease opportunities for unsafe stimulation (e.g., drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, violence)

Teaching Skills

Help teen learn how to gain attention/acceptance through positive behavior (e.g., clubs, teams, academic success) and evaluate relationships

Teach teen to request, choose and work for preferred items, manage money and time, and select alternatives to less appropriate choices

Encourage teen to communicate needs for personal space or time, teach self-management (e.g., planning/scheduling activities)

Teach teen positive ways to produce excitement or challenge self (e.g., competition, healthy physical feats) and to tolerate periods of low activity

Responding to Behavior

Increase amount and quality of attention for positive behavior, acknowledging and praising the teen for small actions; minimize attention for problem behavior

Provide access to preferred items/activities only following appropriate behavior; avoid succumbing to “negotiation”

Allow breaks, escape from demands, environmental changes, or reduced demands for appropriate behavior, not problem behavior

Regulate access to stimulating items and activities, making them available only following appropriate behavior