

Mental Health

Minute

September 2009

Provided by: Front Range Psychological
Associates

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FRPA On-Line



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We're back! After closing the FRPA office for 2 weeks in August, we are back and ready for another school year and autumn!

We had a tremendously successful Summer Food Drive to benefit the [Erie Community Food Bank](#). On September 3rd, we delivered almost 80 pounds of food! We are so grateful to all those who contributed! After talking to the food bank volunteers, we are even more excited about holding future food drives. Next time we might focus on baking staples like flour, butter, and sugar! Everyone has a sweet tooth at some point!

Please read on for tips on parenting teens, and dealing with the back to school blues.

See you in October!

Dr. Bridget Engel & Dr. Stephanie Smith

Dr. Smith's Blog:

Your Mind Your Body

Recent Topics:

What Makes Reality TV
So Riveting?

Making Your First
Appointment with a
Psychologist

Surviving Your Child's
Transition to College

Overindulged Kids

Menopause Got You
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Bed?

Self-Care for the
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Don't Forget!

You can also
follow Dr. Smith
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New in Town

Parenting: The Teen Years



The teen years pose some of the most difficult challenges for families. Teenagers, dealing with hormone changes and an ever-complex world, may feel that no one can understand their feelings, especially parents. As a result, the teen may feel angry, alone and confused while facing complicated issues about identity, peers, sexual behavior, drinking and drugs.

Parents may be frustrated and angry that the teen seems to no longer respond to parental authority. Methods of discipline that worked well in earlier years may no longer have an effect. And, parents may feel frightened and helpless about the choices their teen is making.

As a result, the teen years are ripe for producing conflict in the family. Typical areas of parent-teen conflict may include:

- disputes over the teen's curfew;
- the teen's choice of friends;
- spending time with the family versus with peers;
- school and work performance;
- cars and driving privileges;
- dating and sexuality;
- clothing, hair styles and makeup;
- self destructive behaviors such as smoking, drinking and using drugs.

Dealing with the issues of adolescence can be trying for all



We are so proud to be a part of the Erie community - and so we try to support locally-owned businesses as much as we can. We are THRILLED that [Snowcap Creamery](#) has opened its doors across the street from the rec center! They serve lunch and dinner - but we think the best part is the locally-made, organic ice cream! Delicious! Welcome Snowcap!

Another one of our favorites is [Escape Uptown Salon](#), located just a few blocks South of the FRPA office on Briggs Street. Great service, friendly people, and owned by two local business women. We love it!

concerned. But families are generally successful at helping their children accomplish the developmental goals of the teen years -- reducing dependence on parents, while becoming increasingly responsible and independent.

However, there are a number of warning signs that things are not going well and that the family may want to seek outside help. These include aggressive behavior or violence by the teen, drug or alcohol abuse, promiscuity, school truancy, brushes with the law or runaway behavior. Likewise, if a parent is resorting to hitting or other violent behavior in an attempt to maintain discipline, this is a strong danger sign.

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Back to School Blues



Parents have a lot on their plate: mortgage payments, healthcare, caring for elderly parents, raising kids, just to name a few. As the new school year approaches, they face additional stressors-paying for back-to-school supplies, clothes and possibly tuition.

Many parents may also be worried about their children starting a new school, changing school districts, facing a more rigorous academic year or dealing with difficult social situations. Often the fear of the unknown-classmates, teachers, the school building-is the most stressful for family members, whether it's the children hopping on the school bus or their parents who have to wave goodbye.

"The end of summer and the beginning of a new school year can be a stressful time for parents and children," says psychologist Lynn Bufka, PhD. "While trying to manage work and the household, parents can sometimes overlook their children's feelings of nervousness or anxiety as school begins. Working with your children to build resilience and manage their emotions can be beneficial for the psychological health of the whole family."

Fortunately, children are extremely capable of coping with change and parents can help them in the process by providing a setting that fosters resilience and encourages them to share and express their feelings about returning to school.

APA offers the following back-to-school tips:

1. Practice the first day of school routine: Getting into a sleep routine before the first week of school will aide in easing the shock of waking up early. Organizing things at home-backpack, binder, lunchbox or cafeteria money-will help make the first morning go smoothly. Having healthy, yet kid-friendly lunches will help keep them energized throughout the day. Also, walking through the building and visiting your child's locker and classroom will help ease anxiety of the unknown.

2. Get to know your neighbors: If your child is starting a new school, walk around your block and get to know the neighborhood children. Try and set up a play date, or, for an older child, find out where neighborhood kids might go to safely hang out, like the community pool, recreation center or park.

3. Talk to your child: Asking your children about their fears or worries about going back to school will help them share their burden. Inquire as to what they liked about their previous school or grade and see how those positives can be incorporated into their new experience.

4. Empathize with your children: Change can be difficult, but also exciting. Let your children know that you are aware of what they're going through and that you will be there to help them in the process. Nerves are normal, but highlight that not everything that is different is necessarily bad. It is important to encourage your children to face their fears instead of falling in to the trap of encouraging avoidance.

5. Get involved and ask for help: Knowledge of the school and the community will better equip you to understand your child's surroundings and the transition he or she is undergoing. Meeting members of your community and school will foster support for both you and your child. If you feel the stress of the school year is too much for you and your child to handle on your own, seeking expert advice from a mental health professional, such as a psychologist, will

help you better manage and cope.

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See you in October!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Smith, PsyD
Front Range Psychological Associates