



Tweens & Teens: Planning for Independence

Independence is a healthy part of adolescent development which helps teens and tweens become adults who make healthy decisions. Altering our viewpoint of teen independence from “risky” to “helpful and healthy” is useful. It ensures that we are encouraging our teens to participate in these activities safely as opposed to restricting opportunities completely.

7 Steps to create opportunities for independence:



1. **Identify Opportunities** – In what activities has your tween/teen already expressed interest? Which ones do you anticipate?
2. **Plan in Advance** - Talk with your teen about the details needed in advance. For example: Where they are going, how you will contact them, transportation plan, etc.
3. **Discuss Concerns** - Discuss any concerns you have using I statements, not YOU statements
4. **Develop Rules for Safety** - Together with teen, brainstorm ways you can know they are safe: Ex: Calling to check-in, setting a curfew, etc.
5. **Reward Positive Behavior** - If they did well, allow them to participate in that activity or a similar one again. Be specific with praise naming what you liked about how they handled that situation/activity.
6. **Develop Backup Consequences** - Talk ahead of time about consequences with your teen about what will happen if they don't follow the plan. If they are a part of developing the consequences, they are more likely to stick with the plan.
7. **Conduct Follow-up Meeting** - Ensure you have time, (even if just a few minutes) to ask teen how you think they did and if they need anything for the next opportunity for independence

