

EAP Connections

A newsletter for employees
served by Sutter EAP

5 Pandemic Parenting Tips to Help Your Teen

What is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

Sutter EAP provides employees and family members referrals to licensed, professional therapists. Our network of experienced therapists can help with personal problems that may impact your job, relationships or overall well-being.

- **There is no charge to you!**
- **Confidential!**

Call **800-477-2258** to learn more about your benefit.

“The teen years are tumultuous for many children,” says Jason Cantrill, a licensed marriage and family therapist with Sutter Health’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). When one layers pandemic-related social isolation, disrupted schedules, frightening news and stressed adults on top of normal adolescent hormonal and growth stressors, it can feel overwhelming.

Jason found that the number of parents calling him about signs of depression and anxiety in their teens rose during the pandemic. He advises the following to help parents support their teens through this tough time and possibly head off some problems before becoming issues that need professional treatment:

- 1. Get Out of the House.** Make your teen join you on trips outside the house. Depression can sap one’s will to take steps to feel better. Anxiety can make one fearful of going out. Break this cycle. “Don’t ask your teen if they want to go because they may very well say no,” Jason says. “Just tell them that this is what **we** are doing.”
- 2. Institute Schedules and Routines.** These aren’t just for little kids. Teens need them too, and few teens are developmentally ready to set and stick to a schedule on their own.
- 3. Limit Screen Use,** especially before bedtime. Disrupted sleep schedules are both a symptom and a risk factor for many behavioral health issues.
- 4. Gather Around the Table.** Eat as a family. Remember, our teens need routine, and sharing regular meals together provides opportunities to check in with them.
- 5. Ask for help.** Parenting a teen is complicated. It is normal to be confused about what to say or do. Getting advice from a professional early on can give you the support you need to support your child.

Note: *If your teen expresses a desire to self-harm or commit suicide, seek assistance right away. If it is an emergency, call 9-1-1. Jason advises, “Even if you believe that your teen isn’t serious, they are still in a lot of pain that needs to be addressed.” Sutter EAP offers referrals to licensed professionals who can support you and your teen. To access, call Sutter EAP 24/7 at 800-477-2258.*

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS OF TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Just because your kids are big doesn't mean you stop being their parent. But it can mean that parenting support resources become a little harder to find. Sutter EAP is there to help. In addition to counseling, EAP has:

- Webinars on parenting teens and relationships.
- Tips on app-based therapy tools that can help teens and young adults.
- Mindfulness and meditation resources.
- Behavioral and habit-forming aids.
- Resources for LGBTQ+ teens and young adults

“Parenting doesn't stop at 18. Until they are fully established, we're not done parenting.”

— Kim Narvaez, LMFT



Not a Teen, Not Yet Fully Adult

How to Support Transitional Age Youth

Legally, teens become adults on their 18th birthday but don't expect your child to magically change into a grownup the moment the candles get blown out. Behavioral health therapists often refer to adult children ages 18 to 25 as Transitional Age Youth — and these young people still need support.

“The path to adulthood for Transitional Age Youth became a little rockier during the pandemic,” explains Kim Narvaez, a licensed marriage and family therapist with Sutter Health EAP. Some had to return home, either because of a job loss or because their college or university sent students home to learn virtually.

“If your adult child is living with you, you have to set rules for your home and maintain the role of parent,” Kim says. “It's so much harder to tell the child, oh, I have something to teach you when they don't see you as a parent anymore.”

Although resetting the relationship boundaries with an adult child can be challenging, it's an opportunity to really help your child launch into adulthood. Kim advises teaching them how to:

- **Finance and Budget.** Though rarely taught in schools, financial skills are essential to ensure your child doesn't bounce back home because they cannot manage money on their own.
- **Ask and Receive Help.** Young adults want to be independent, but everyone needs help from time to time. Learning when to ask for help and being open to suggestions are important life skills.
- **Manage Setbacks and Frustrations.** Young adults ages 18 to 25 are going through a great deal of emotional and cognitive development, Kim explains. The brain is still developing executive functioning, which means they are still learning how to think like an adult about problems.
- **Nurture Healthy Relationships.** Young adulthood is a time to learn how to navigate various types of interpersonal relationships, which can be hard to do without healthy models.

Most importantly, keep talking. If you've kept lines of communication open, your young adult will feel more comfortable coming to you with problems. “Parenting doesn't stop at 18,” Kim says. “Until they are fully established, we're not done parenting.”