

# Five tips for strengthening your marriage WHILE raising teens

By Jeff Dwarshuis LMSW ACSW

**1. Align in discipline and decisions** - Outside of inappropriate methods of discipline, the choice of discipline is much less important than the spouses' staying aligned. Even if you disagree, present a united front verbally and physically. Discuss differences in private.

**2. Hold off on directives and exercise negotiation** – Adolescents need to increasingly make decisions independently. Parents can talk alone to discuss the parameters of teen decisions then assist the teen in making decisions by asking questions. This facilitates parental influence and decreases opposition.

**3. Tell Your Story** – Does your teen “act out” the same way you did? Are you divorced or recovering from substance abuse? Tell your story of change first to your spouse and then to the teen in an appropriate way they can understand. The teen is most likely experiencing the same thing but does not know how to end it.

**4. Don't do for a teen as they can do for themselves** – Rescuing a teen from the realities of adulthood is destructive. Assist teens in being independent by increasingly having them take on adult tasks such as earning money, spending money with limitation, cooking and cleaning. Parents can use the extra time to date.

**5. Talk together to make plans of success for the teen and then tell them what you did** – Following this suggestion will demand from your teen that they visualize their parents as loving, bonded advocates for their well-being. It makes it very difficult for the child to consciously be oppositional.

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