



Keeping Kids Healthy and Safe

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Meet Kristi Miller



Kristi Miller, MA, CAPI, and Solutions in Parenting Founder, is a [Certified Aware Parenting Instructor](#) and Parenting Consultant who offers a distinctive form of parent education coupled with hands-on training for parents and their families. For more than a decade, Kristi has been dedicated to a specialized form of parent education she developed, [Bond Strengthening Parenting®](#), which honors and encourages parents and helps them define and maintain their own personal styles. This, in turn, allows children to thrive in a loving and collaborative environment.

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Parenting Center

Speaking of Parenting...

We are setting our Fall and Winter schedules for 2008-2009.

We can bring a Parenting Expert to you! We can speak to your parent groups, schools, daycares, preschools, churches, or other groups, about:

Sibling rivalry
Discipline

As you may already know, October is National Children's Health Month. Many parents understand what it means to keep children healthy and safe: look both ways before you cross the street, don't talk to strangers, store all chemicals and medications out of reach, eat nourishing foods, get plenty of exercise and get enough sleep, to name a few. But what many parents may not realize is that keeping our children healthy also means being aware of what is happening when they are not with you. As children grow older and more independent, they are faced with more and more situations where their health and safety can be compromised.

We help parents learn how to keep their kids safe and healthy in many ways throughout the year. So, although October is nearly over, we want to suggest that this theme of health and safety be present all year long. To get you started thinking more deeply about year-long health and safety, this newsletter is especially dedicated to the parents of kids ages 9-18 years old; commonly referred to as pre-teens(9-12) and teens(13-18).

While the following 10 tips can be used in some form for young children, they are particularly pertinent for the parents of pre-teens and teenagers to help them understand the changing needs of their kids and how to provide appropriate ways to keep them safe and healthy.

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10 Tips for Keeping Pre-teens and Teens Healthy and Safe

Children and parents between the ages of 9 and 18 are presented with many different challenges. At this age kids want greater independence from parental control, have a bigger and more important circle of peers, and have very busy schedules. Keeping this age group of kids healthy and safe may prove to be a greater challenge the older they get. Even though it feels as if your teens are pushing you away, that does not mean you *should* go away. This means that as parents, you find a balance between being a good listener, knowing when and what to say, and knowing when and how to exert your parental control.

There is significant agreement among parenting experts, that children listen to what their parents say, even though they don't seem to be listening. There is also overwhelming evidence that a strong primary relationship that has loving acceptance, realistic boundaries, and connection, contributes to the emotional health of kids. Developing and maintaining a relationship with your teenager or pre-teen that offers support and acceptance while accommodating and affirming the child's increasing maturity, seems to be the recipe for success with kids 9-18. The following tips can help you get started talking, connecting, and keeping your teens healthy and safe.

1. **Listen.** Spend time just listening to your teen's thoughts and feelings about his or her fears, frustrations, interests, ideas and relationships. Create time for them to find a way to be comfortable talking to you--whether it's a day of shopping and lunch, a walk, a drive to practice or by the refrigerator in the afternoon. Try to just listen when they talk and keep your judgments and perspectives to yourself at this time.
2. **To each his or her own.** Treat each teen as a unique individual distinct from siblings,

Co-parenting
Effective Conflict-resolution
Or any other parenting issues

Please [contact us](#) with questions or to schedule your event.

[Visit Solutions in Parenting](#) to see our website and learn what we can do for you.

[Visit useful parenting links and resources](#)

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Monthly Parenting Challenge

How well do you know your teen? Do you find yourself arguing, debating, lecturing or yelling when talking to your child? If so, you may be shutting out valuable information your teen needs you to have. We want you to challenge yourself to just listen next time you get to have a conversation with your teen. Instead of trying to insert your opinion or judgment, try to just breathe and sympathetically nod, for example. Or phrases such as, "tell me more", "what is/was that like for you?", or "sounds like you had a rough day", are all ways to encourage more disclosure without shutting down your teen with judgment, yelling or debating. You may discover some things about your teen you never knew before. We are curious...let us know how it goes.

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What is Parenting Consultation?

We are offering personal parenting education and consultation for committed parents who want to raise confident, compassionate and responsible children.

It is now possible to bring an experienced consultant into your family life on a regular basis. Either by phone or in person, your consultant can help you create solutions to your daily parenting challenges with loving and effective lifelong parenting techniques. Start being the very best parent you can be **today**.

[Call us](#) today for your free 30-minute gift session to see if parenting consultation is for you.

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We want to hear from YOU

Are you struggling through some parenting "rough spots"

stereotypes, your own past, or his or her own past behaviors. Acknowledge these unique qualities by giving your teen a meaningful place in the family by providing opportunity for him or her to use specific talents to help the whole family.

3. **Discuss, don't argue.** Expect increased criticism and debate from your teen. Strengthen your skills for discussing those ideas and disagreements in ways that respect both your teen's opinions and your own.

4. **Family-time.** Eat dinner as a family at least six times a week. Familiar family routines and consistent family time helps teens trust that home is a safe and predictable place for them, especially when the rest of their lives are changing.

5. **Be consistent.** Make clear rules and agreements for the whole family and enforce them consistently. Through consistent establishment and reinforcement of expectations and rules, teens will gain a clear sense of what is acceptable and what is not. They will also better understand the consequences attached to breaking those agreements. If rules and consequences are too arbitrary, kids will not clearly understand what is expected of them or what the punishments will be and may have a hard time learning those rules.

6. **Keep track.** Know where your kids are at all times: who they are spending time with, how to reach them, and when they will be home. Try to avoid feeling a false sense of security and putting too much responsibility on their shoulders when they may not be developmentally ready for it. Research is demonstrating that the hours after school, but before parents get home from work, is a very critical time for teens. Create a support system for your kids with responsible adults and accountability, especially during these few vulnerable hours when you are not with them.

7. **Set guidelines.** Monitor what your teen watches on television, how they interact on the internet, and with whom they are talking on the phone. Set clear guidelines for these areas based on your own family values.

8. **The Birds, the Bees and then some.** Encourage kids to ask questions about alcohol, drugs, sex and other prevalent subjects. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the average girl takes her first sip of alcohol at age 13 and the average boy takes his first sip at age 11; in 2006, 2.1 million teens admitted to abusing prescription medication; and 7.1% of students surveyed, had had sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13. Keeping kids healthy and safe means addressing topics of alcohol, drugs and sex. They need to hear what is right and wrong from their parents or other trusted adults. Otherwise, they may turn to their peers for information which could be wrong, harmful or unsafe.

9. **Keep talking.** Keep a natural, open, ongoing dialogue with each individual child about the choices he/she may be faced with. Role playing, specific examples from their lives, and topics you all see together on TV or movies may help the family keep the conversations going. Seize the "teachable moments" and talk to you kids about life. If you are too uncomfortable to answer their questions, or simply don't know the answers, assure them that you will help them to find the answers from another trustworthy source.

10. **Do as I do.** Model the appropriate behaviors you expect from your teens. Your kids pay as much attention to your actions as they do to your words (maybe even more!). Show appropriate, healthy, and safe behavior to your kids and support it with plenty of open communication, so they may learn from you what it looks and feels like to be healthy and safe.

Of course, not all parents can use all ten of these tips all of the time. Try using one or two that feel right to you and see what happens. You may discover along with a healthier and safer teen, increased communication, deeper connection and more peace within the family.

right now and need a bit of advice? We are always here for you. Whether you are in the middle of a divorce, potty training your toddler or screaming at your teen, we can help. Send us an [email](#) and we will respond with some helpful guidance to get you through.