



Support Your Teen's Independence: 5 Keys for Parents

by Karla Lester, M.D. (DrKarla, ActivistMD)



Key

1

Powerful positivity focusing on your teen's strengths is Key #1 to launch your teen into the world ready to reach their health and life goals and chase their dreams!

What would it be like if your teen could stop worrying about their weight and instead focus fully on achieving their life goals and dreams? It seems counterintuitive, but the reality is, in order to support teens' health independence, as parents we have to back off, stay away from focusing on weight and instead nurture a positive body and self-image.

Action: My teen has so many strengths. Feeling love for my teen, I'll make a list of a few of my teen's strengths.

Key

2

Recognize the thoughts and beliefs that are keeping you stuck and not serving you or your teen.

Right now, you're probably thinking:

Weight is such a painful subject and I'm worried I will cause harm if I bring it up.

My teen's doctor just told us that he/she/they are obese and have pre-diabetes. I'm scared and feel ashamed and guilty.

I know my teen has been bullied and his/her/their weight affects friendships, sports, activities, and gets in the way of their life goals.

I've always struggled with my weight and feel so guilty that I put this on my child.

My teen isn't motivated. Nothing has worked that we've tried before.

The good news is these are all just thoughts. They may feel powerful, even like a belief. You can keep choosing to believe these thoughts or you can start to choose a more useful thought or belief that serves you as a parent supporting your teen's health independence.

Action: What are some thoughts or beliefs that are keeping me stuck as a parent supporting my teen's health independence?



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Key 3

Challenge thoughts and beliefs that are keeping you stuck.

We are not used to challenging beliefs. Maybe, you've been believing something for so long, you can't imagine not believing it. Our brains want to keep us in the comfort zone of status quo. If you feel stuck and keep thinking and doing the same thing without getting anywhere, it's probably because of a thought or belief you keep choosing as true. Our thoughts create our feelings. If you want to be motivated, think motivating thoughts.

Action: Are these thoughts even true? Or, do I just keep believing them? Are they serving me as I try to show up as a supportive parent for my teen?

Key 4

Decide how you want to show up as a parent.

I always want to show up as a loving and supportive parent. Does this always happen? Of course not! After doing a lot of life-coaching, I can now recognize when I have a tendency to fix and control my teen(s). I may have good intentions, but how I show up as a parent when I have the thought that I need to fix and control is not productive and sometimes backfires. I've decided a softer approach works so much better. So, I choose this thought, "I show up as a loving and supportive parent." Then, I try to do my best and at the same time recognize that I am a human who makes mistakes and will get it wrong sometimes and that's okay.

Action: Ask, how do I want to show up as a parent who supports my teen's health independence?

Key 5

Role model self-compassion.

Let your teen see you be open and vulnerable and not beat yourself up when you make mistakes. Be kind to yourself as a parent. There's nothing going wrong here. Shame begets shame and creates secondary judgement and will move you to act in ways where you aren't showing up as your true self.

Action: What's my self-compassion mantra I will tell myself when situations with my teen are hard or aren't going how I expected?