**As Teens Push Away, What Can Parents Do To Support Them?**

(*an increase school performance?)*

By: Karen Flick M.S., CAS Certified School Psychologist *adapted from Deborah Farmer Kris*

The teenage years are marked by paradoxes. Even as teens’ cognitive and problems-solving capacities are expanding, many adolescents experience declines in academic performance, coupled with an increase in behavioral and mental health concerns. Research suggests that parental involvement helps stave off these negative trends.

The good news is that youth still want their parents to be involved. This involvement does not have to a power struggle. Parents need not be afraid to allow teens to try and succeed or try, fail and try again. Parents are in the single-best position to cultivate, encourage and affirm their teen’s development.

 Here are some ways parents can be involved that have been directly linked with increased academic achievement and decreased behavioral concerns.

1. **Scaffold Independence**- let your teen try out things, with a ‘safety net.’ This includes giving them opportunities to try – and fail at- new endeavors, waiting for them to ask for help before rushing in to provide it, and talking through choices and potential outcomes and then allowing them to make their own informed decisions.
2. **Provide Structure at Home** – parents can support academic achievement by providing time, space and materials for teens to manage their won schoolwork. This also includes establish family expectations regarding homework and leisure activities and providing academically enriching family activities. However, this structure should also honor teens’ growing autonomy. For example, avoid over-involvement in homework.
3. **Link Education to Future Success** - parents can help teens connect the dots between their current academic efforts and their future success. This requires ongoing conversation about their career goals and about how teens’ current schoolwork is relevant to their aspiration. Parents who engage in this dialogue help children find meaning in their academic efforts, which is a key ingredient to internal motivation.
4. **Demonstrate Warmth** – provide a parent child relation that balances emotional closeness, structure and autonomy. However, recent research indicates that parental warmth has an *amplifying* effect on each of the above named strategies.