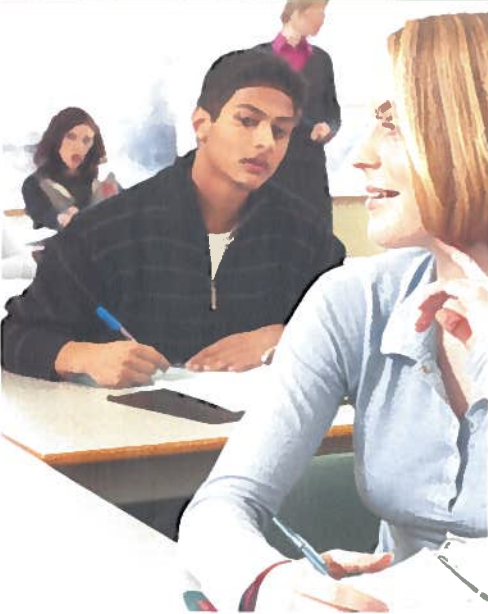


# Starting High School



## *Help your teen succeed*

**N**ew beginnings are both exciting and intimidating! Most adults have experienced the transition from single life to married life, from the life of a student to the life of an employee, from apartment living to home ownership. For students, the transition to high school is a time of excitement and anxiety.

In 2003, Grade 8 students in Halton reported five main stressors with starting high school. Parents can help ease these concerns by building confidence and competence, positive values and 'people' skills in their teens. Here are a few ideas.

### 1. Balancing homework, sports, extracurricular activities and jobs

Parents can introduce teens to a variety of activities and people, and negotiate a balance of commitments and interests. Encourage your teen to get involved in a club or sports team. Students who feel connected to school, friends, families and communities experience more academic success. Balance activity with quiet time.

- Teach time-management skills
- Limit part-time work to 15 hours a week
- Set ground rules and have logical consequences
- Limit TV and computer time
- Monitor activities and well being
- Ensure a minimum of 7-9 hours of sleep every night

### 2. Making friends and keeping friends

Youth with strong interpersonal skills work well in groups, resolve personal conflicts peacefully and are comfortable sharing ideas and feelings. Be sensitive to teen frustrations.

- Encourage after-school activities
- Create positive peer networks for teens
- Solve interpersonal problems together
- Listen – “really” listen
- Welcome their friends in your home
- Seek support from their friends' parents

### 3. Surviving in a larger school, getting lost and competing for teams

Teens are particularly anxious about being embarrassed and looking like a 'loser.' Parents can help teens plan for change and solve problems together. Reassure students that it's normal to feel unsure at first. Most new students are feeling the same way.

- Take your teen, while they are still in grade 8, to high school events like sports or theatre
- Review high school year book for activities and clubs
- Talk about the challenges of starting high school
- Recommend involvement in school social activities
- Monitor school activities and relationships
- Ensure teens know where to go for help

## 4. Dealing with bullying, teasing, intimidation and violence

Friendships and good interpersonal skills are the best defense against intimidation. Parents can stay alert to signs of trouble and invite discussion and mutual problem solving.

- Encourage supportive friendships
- Practice assertiveness with your teen
- Work with the school
- Model firm discipline
- Discourage discrimination and aggression in all forms
- Encourage teens to ask for help

## 5. Managing longer classes, exams, projects and academic course choices

Adolescents with a commitment to learning are more likely to succeed in school. Parents can assist with course selection and career choices. Consult with school staff.

- Help set achievable goals
- Set time and space aside for homework
- Recognize and praise effort, not perfection
- Teach priority-setting and time management
- Stay informed about schedules and social activities
- Attend School Council meetings and parent-teacher meetings

Most importantly, continue to talk with your teens in a respectful way. You are still a very big influence in their lives.



# Help your teens live with stress

As your teens move into high school, stress can motivate them to work hard and succeed. Stress can also cause anxiety and risk-taking behaviour, like smoking and drug use. Make sure teens have time for things they like to do.

Here are some ideas to help your teen deal with stress:

### Look at lifestyle habits

- Encourage regular eating and discourage skipping meals
- Help choose a balanced diet with less junk food and caffeine
- Encourage 90 minutes of physical activity every day
- Establish a healthy sleeping routine with a minimum of 7-9 hours of sleep daily
- Include fun and relaxation in family routines

### Talk about stressful situations

- Encourage teens to identify their needs and concerns
- Listen to them and acknowledge their emotions
- Involve teens in problem solving
- Discuss healthy ways to manage stress

### Be positive

- Help teens see problems as opportunities
- Be realistic in your expectations
- Keep a sense of humour

### Demonstrate good stress management

- Be in charge of your emotions e.g., take a deep breath, count to ten
- Avoid the use of substances like alcohol to cope with stress
- Make time for yourself, everyday
- Set limits and share the load
- Talk to someone

Helping teens keep their stress in perspective may be your greatest challenge. Share your experiences from high school ... you'll find that things haven't changed that much.

Parenting support programs are also available free of charge to all parents of teens and youth about to enter high school. Find out more at:

Halton Region

Dial 311 or 905-825-6000

Toll free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

TTY: 905-827-9833

[www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca)

HE-09096