moms OF TWEENS & TEENS

Empowering Tools & Scripts

Identifying Problems/Skills That Need Developing:

●*Identify what the issue or problem is that needs to be addressed.*
●*Instead of focusing on the negative and seeing this as a problem ask yourself...*

What skill(s) might they be lacking?

This will help you shift your focus from being reactive and frustrated to one of curiosity and being proactive about what they might need.

Slow things down when there are high emotions:

If your kid is overwhelmed and in the fight/flight or freeze mode (and you may be too). It can be helpful to slow things down. These are the moments when they are flooded with emotions and trying to reason with them is not helpful.

You might say things like,

"I see how overwhelming this is for you. What might you need?"
"Is there anything you need from me that might be helpful?"
"Ok, let's take a minute and take a deep breath."
"Let's take 5 or take a break and then we can revisit this."
"What's the first thing you might do?"

The point is... you're slowing it down to help your tween and teen to think about what they need or want to do next. You don't have to make suggestions or give them advice. They might not answer and that's okay. Let them sit and think about it. This will help them to be more empowered because you validated their feelings and also you are letting them decide what it is that they need.

When you're tired of nagging and reminding:

Instead of*"I've told you 100 times to pick up yourstuff."*And no matter how much you remind or nag it's not working.
Try,*"Let's come up with a plan so I don't have tokeep reminding you. What might work?"*
Instead of saying*"Stop complaining."*Validate theirconcerns and feelings, *"You sound frustrated."*

Rather than offer suggestions or advice, put them in the driver's seat:

~~Ask versus tell:~~

~~*"What's your plan?"*~~

"What's your plan for getting your homework done before this weekend?"

"What do you want to do about that?"

"What is the next thing you need to do?"

Asking is so much more effective than us nagging or telling them for multiple reasons.Developmentally they want to be independentso they tend to resist our input and the plans we've made for them.

Asking empowering questions versus telling them:

- Puts them in the driver's seat where they get to take responsibility and ownership for their choices.
- Supports them to practice and strengthen their executive functioning skills.
- Empowers them to be proactive and become more skilled at thinking through their choices, managing their time and developing problem solving skills that will help them to be more confident and independent.
- Conveys the message that they are resourceful and that you believe in their ability to figure things out.

When They Don't Want To Do Something or Are Stuck

Instead of trying to force or demand your kid to do something right that moment.

"You might say, "I see that you're not wanting to do this right now. When do you plan to work on it? Or "What's your plan to get it done?""

If they seem to be stuck rather than jumping to the rescue you might ask,

"How might I support you?" or "Is there anything I can do to help?"

Helping Them Process Their Emotions and Fostering Empathy

Check it out

Say what you see.

"You seem upset." Or "You seem sad or disappointed."

Give empathy:

"Are you doing okay?"

"Want to talk?"

"Do you want to share what's going on?"

"Anything I can do to help?"

"I'm here if you want to talk."

"If you need to vent or share your upset I will just listen."

Model for your tween/teen what you're feeling or upset about:

For example, "I notice I'm feeling anxious about _____."

Share why this bothers us - I'm upset about _____because_____."

Listen to feelings first versus rushing into offering advice. There is a place for problem solving but after you've listened first.

<u>Try to avoid using "we"</u>

For example, "How do 'we' get your college applications done?"

Instead, you can say, "What's your plan to get your college applications done?"

<u>Be the Supportive Coach:</u>

Allow them to take ownership. You are coaching and supporting them.

Examples -

"What are you planning to do about this?"

"What do you want to do?"

"What might help?"

"Do you want my help or support with this?"

<u>Make a Plan with These Three Questions:</u>

- *"What is the challenge?"*
- *"What might you need?"*
- *"Would you like my support?"*

_____

<u>Provide Them WIth Strategies:</u>

Tweens and teens can get overwhelmed easily and anxious. They are learning skills on how to manage their time, responsibilities, schedules and social lives.

Responsibilities are growing as they get older and they feel this.

So let's say that you see they're feeling overwhelmed.

You might say,*"I can see that you're overwhelmed.What might you do first."*

This supports them:

- To think strategically about breaking things down into manageable chunks.
- To combat stress (great strategy for us as well!)
- When they get overwhelmed, help them to think about how they don't need to do it all at once but to break down each thing they need to do.

<u>Model this as well out loud when you get overwhelmed:</u>

You might say something like,

"I'm feeling overwhelmed with all I have to do today but I'm going to break it down and do this one thing first and then next I will do …"

<u>If they are open, encourage them to break down their tasks in order of importance:</u>

Say they have five things to do that day.*"You mightsay, "What are you planning to do first and then what are you going to do next?"*

Timers can be helpful.

Many kids aren't good with realizing the amount of time something can take them and they get into scarcity thinking and feel overwhelmed so they either don't do it or rush through it. -*"I don'thave enough time."*

Establishing Reasonable Expectations for Teens

It's important to create reasonable expectations for tweens and teens but how do you establish expectations and ground rules that you both agree on? It takes time, effort and investment from everyone involved and it might not go smoothly at first but it is worth it even though it won't be perfect!

#1 Involve Them in the Process

It's crucial that your tween or teen is involved in the process of defining expectations. When you get their input they are more likely to comply with the expectations because they have had a say in the process versus telling them what to do.

Find a good time to sit down and have a conversation not a lecture and not something heavy or overwhelming. Make it positive.

Get their thoughts:

Ask questions before giving answers:

You may some version of the following,

"What do you think your expectations are?"

"What do you think your expectations should be?"

"How do you think you can accomplish them?"

"Why do you think meeting those expectations is important?"

Listen:

They may not say what you want to hear on the first go round. Expect this. It's okay and normal. The goal is to openly dialogue and to encourage them to think about what they want for themselves versus you being the driving force.

Say what you want.

After you've listened and (fought the urge to talk) you can share your thoughts and what you want the expectations to be.
These are what I want the expectations to be _____.

Examples:

●All your homework is handed in weekly.
●You spend at least an hour on homework a night during the weekday (this of course can vary on your kid).
●You help to contribute around the house by _____.

Come up with agreed upon consequences

"If you're missing an assignment what do you think the consequence should be?"
Example:

If you don't hand in an assignment we talk about what you might need and why."(this is supporting them to get to the rootof why and helping them to problem solve. Perhaps they need to email the teacher when they don't understand something. So kids struggle to ask for help so they avoid the work.) The key is you want to support them to be successful.

"If xyz doesn't happen before you go out on Friday you need to have it finished."
Confirm you made the agreement.

“Ok so the agreement is - if you are missing an assignment you need to get the assignment done before you can see friends or be on your Xbox.”

Focus On What’s Happening Now

If you're offering your child guidance about something, stick to what's happening right now and empower your child to solve it.

*"You always forget to ..."*makes him the problem,and programs him to keep forgetting.

Instead say something like...

"It's hard to remember. How do you think you can help yourself remember tomorrow?"

This acknowledges that he has a problem that other people sometimes have also, and helps him move from*being*the problemto becoming the problem solver.