

Values-Based Autonomy

Values-based autonomy occurs when teenagers are empowered to have independent thoughts and feelings about things like religion, morals, and politics. When teens engage in this type of autonomy, they take into consideration their values when making decisions.

Here are some ways to strengthen values-based autonomy in teenagers:

- Strive to maintain authoritative parenting. Demonstrate love and compassion for your teen but remain firm and consistent in discipline.
- Encourage your teen to join organizations where they have an opportunity to serve on committees or boards, such as student government or civic groups.
- Discuss politics, religion, and morals with your teenager. Present your thoughts, and do not invalidate theirs.
- Have your teenager explain their thinking behind their opinions. Remember, their ideas may not be the same as yours, but they are a valuable component of your teen's development of values-based autonomy.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities to discuss the consequences of behavior, whether good or bad.
- Teenagers need to be held accountable when they make poor decisions. Be sure to follow through with repercussions previously stated (like in an Accountable Family Member Contract), and explain those consequences.
- Show appreciation when teens are doing well or are continually demonstrating good behavior. Many times, teens feel they are only noticed when they are doing something wrong.



Emotional Autonomy

One of the ways to help your teenager develop emotional autonomy is to ensure that your household has family cohesion. Family cohesion exists when there is warmth and affection, closeness, and support in family relationships

Examples of Family Cohesion	Examples of an Absence of Family Cohesion
Family members know each other's close friends	Parents do not know who their child's friends are
Family members enjoy spending some amount of their free time together	Family members avoid one another, or everyone is always off doing their own thing
Family members know who in the household is responsible for specific roles and tasks	Chores do not get done on time or at all
Family sets, and accomplishes, goals together	The family feels disorganized and does little with intent
There are clear and consistent consequences when a family member breaks a rule	Rules and consequences are not formally stated and can vary day to day
If someone has a problem, they know they can trust their family to help them resolve it	Family members feel they cannot depend on one another and face challenges alone
Family members can talk through disagreements and come to a positive resolution	Arguments in the home frequently end in yelling matches, and no solutions are found

Behavioral Autonomy

Allow teens to make rules, within reason, to help build their behavioral autonomy. Below are some examples of rules your teen can establish.

- Bedtime
- How income from allowance or afterschool job will be spent and saved
- Develop and share their weekly schedule
- Develop the agenda for family meetings



Parents and teens can make decisions about more consequential topics together. Keep communication positive in these discussions. Listen to your teen's input, and respond appropriately.

- Curfew
- Driving privileges
- What to do when a friend offers drugs or alcohol
- Plan details about activities to do during family outing or vacation