



- R** relationships
- E** energy
- A** awareness
- D** decision maker
- Y** yes



If you would like more information on adolescent parenting issues, please call the Vermont Parents Assistance Line at:  
**1-800-PARENTS**



Vermont Department of Health  
108 Cherry Street  
Burlington, VT 05401



**FOR LIFE:**

**Building  
Adolescent  
Strengths**

Are you worried about early and risky sexual behavior, drugs, drinking and school failure?



**Most parents have instinctively  
been building their children's  
strengths since infancy but some-  
times the positive messages can  
become buried in adolescence.**



# READY



Being the parent of an adolescent is a challenging and rewarding time. You watch your child develop talents and strengths for a successful adult life while at the same time learning to avoid some of the risks of youth.

Always, parents ask, "What can I do to help my child through all the ups and downs of adolescence?" Today's parents worry about drugs, drinking and smoking, early and risky sexual behavior, school failure, and any number of social and relationship problems.

There seems to be a lot of negative news for parents to hear. However there is good news for parents based on our most recent years of research. Researchers have been finding that parents can help prevent problem adolescent behaviors and promote healthy development by helping their teens build on their strengths.

The Vermont Child Health Improvement Program has developed an approach called **READY**, based on that research. The **READY** plan outlines areas of strength that will help adolescents grow successfully through their teen years. It offers parents a way to focus on those areas of strength and help their teens in a positive way.



**R** stands for relationships with friends, other students, coworkers and family. Does your child build strong relationships with the other important people in his or her life? A teenager who feels strong bonds with family members and friends has a major strength. A primary goal of parents is to love and connect with their children. Children are much more likely than parents may think to adopt their parents' values, especially when they feel loved and connected.

**E** stands for energy. It's the energy to give to the things they enjoy. Many parents of strong, resilient teenagers have spent considerable effort helping their youngsters find activities that they enjoy and that give them a way to happily participate.

**A** stands for awareness. It's awareness of the world around them, their place in the world and their contribution. A healthy adolescent is growing into that awareness. That awareness is leading to a sense of direction and belonging, of learning how to make his or her own contribution. One way to develop this strength is through volunteer activities. Parents can help their teens learn to be contributors, enjoying a positive relationship with their community.

**D** stands for decision maker. Adolescents who know how to get things done and can control their behavior will have an important strength in avoiding adolescent risk behaviors. This is a major strength that leads to success in school and in extra-curricular activities. Parents can have an important role in providing opportunities for their youth to become successful decision makers.

**Y** stands for "Yes". A strong teenager will say yes to healthy behavior; he or she will eat well, play hard, work hard. Parents can help by modeling that healthy behavior and affirming it when they see it in their own children.



With a renewed effort to approach the challenges of adolescence in a positive, strength-building way, families, pediatricians, teachers, and others working with our youth can give young people the tools they need to be successful.

