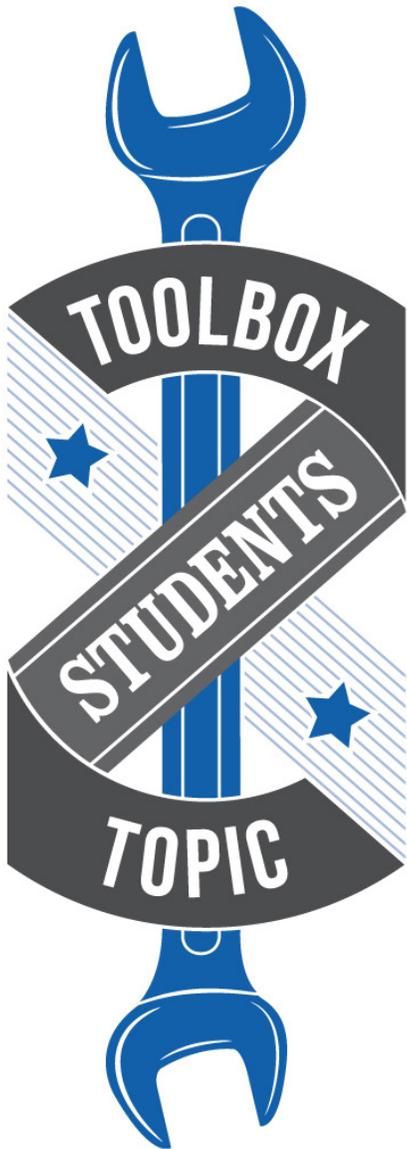


Helping Your Teen Set Boundaries



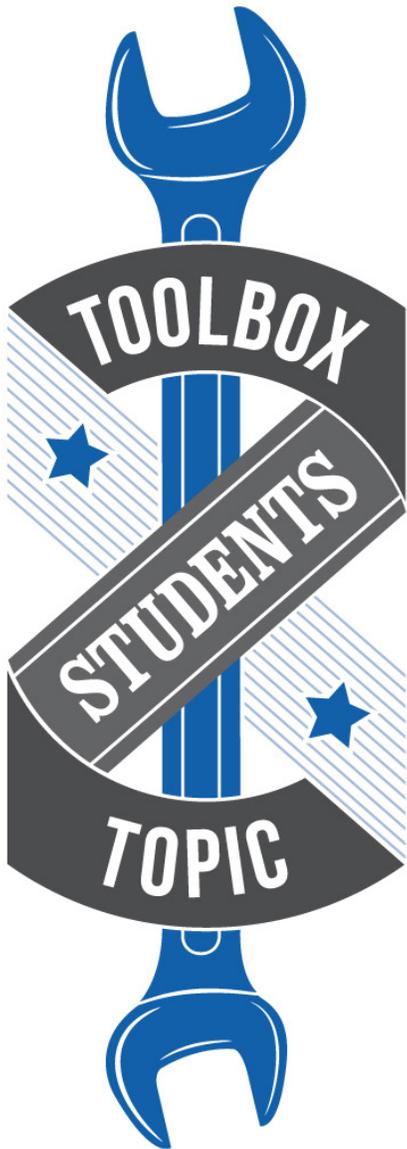
When your children are young you are able to set many boundaries for them such as what TV shows they can watch, who they can play with, what time they go to bed, or how long they can play video games. As they get older and have more independence, it's important to encourage teens to set these boundaries for themselves.

Essential boundaries for teens to set include areas like how to spend their time, who to spend it with, whether or not they will drink alcohol or consume drugs, how physically intimate they will be with people they date, what time their curfew is, and how they will interact with technology. If their behavior is governed merely by your rules you have established for them, they miss out on the decision making process that enables them to learn how to make wise choices. They may also push against boundaries they don't understand or see the value of and fight you. If you help your teen create boundaries by working through it *with* your teen, they are more likely to feel personal ownership of them and maintain these guidelines when out of your supervision.

When creating boundaries, it is important for teens to think about how they will react in situations before they happen. If they wait until a friend is handing them a drink to decide if they will consume alcohol, the decision they make might be influenced by the moment and the people around them rather than their personal conviction. If they wait until they are making out with someone to decide how far they will go physically before marriage, they might make a decision more influenced by hormones and fear of rejection than biblical principles.

Boundaries don't all have to do with taboo topics like drugs and sex. They should also be about time spent on technology, eating well, exercising, and spending time with family. Helping your teen learn to manage their time and avoid over-committing themselves can set them up for more success in college and life.

If you set all the boundaries and your teen messes up, they've broken your rules and let you down. If they set some of their own boundaries, when they mess up they've let themselves and God down. You won't always be around to set boundaries for your teen, so it is important they have time to practice doing this while the consequences may not be so severe and before they go off to college



or a career. Pray that God will give them wisdom and guide them in these boundaries in their life.

In the Old Testament God sets boundaries on how the Israelites would spend their time (Sabbath), how they harvested their fields (Leviticus 19:22), and how they should live (10 Commandments.) In the New Testament God calls us to be sanctified and set apart as believers, which requires us to set boundaries for ourselves in addition to the boundaries God gives to us. Second Timothy 2:21 says, "Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work." Pray that God will make your teen an instrument set aside for special purposes.

Encourage your teen to look in the Bible for guidance and pray that God will help them know wise boundaries to set. Encourage them to read Proverbs, or read it together as you both seek God's wisdom on the boundaries in your lives. And at all opportunity, demonstrate through your example what this looks like.