

# 10 Tips

for PARENTS of  
HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIORS

If I had to choose one statement that applies to every parenting journey, it would be this one:

The days may be long, but the years are short.

There may not be a more accurate description of the parenting journey. One day you are struggling with diapers and sippy cups and lost pacifiers, plotting how you can squeeze in a nap or a few moments of quiet. Before you know it, your child is driving himself to school, busy with a job, friends, and life, and you are left wondering when you might be able to squeeze in some quality time over family dinner. Where did the time go?

At this point in the parenting journey, you may think it is time to take your hands off the wheel and coast to the finish line. Parenting a senior can be hard (and frustrating) work! One minute they seem ready to step out into the world, and the next they are crying in their room saying, "I am not prepared!"

Finishing well requires you to sharpen your focus and take your game to the next level. Just like you want your student to succeed, you also need to finish well in your parenting journey. You can do it!

Here are 10 Things Your Senior Needs from you!

## PERMISSION

There is an adage in parenting that says, "Always say yes unless you must say no." A "yes" is an investment in your relationship with your student. It builds trust and confidence, and it opens the lines of communication.

Look for small opportunities to say yes! Say yes to a post-game meal activity. Say yes to staying out an extra 30 minutes. Say yes to ordering a homecoming t-shirt. Say yes to re-arranging their room or hanging a giant poster of their favorite band.

When you say yes most of the time, your "no" will have more impact and be treated with more respect.

## INDEPENDENCE

High school students yearn for independence, but it escalates to a new level during the senior year. Most seniors think their senior status earns them complete freedom to do and go wherever they want. They certainly need to experience greater independence because they will likely be moving out very soon.

However, make sure to hold them accountable on both ends of the spectrum. More independence may mean more freedom to choose their weekend activities, but it also means they need to manage their money, mow the lawn, and take care of their car.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility goes hand in hand with independence. It keeps your student grounded and holds them accountable. Without responsibility, independence is just extra free time.

Responsibility is the "grown-up" side of independence that positions your student to be a productive and positive citizen.

## ATTENTION

Attention is sorely lacking in today's society. Most people pay more attention to their cell phone or social media feed than the people who live in their house. Your student needs your attention.

Attention communicates interest and often requires patience and a willingness to stay up late! It leads you to ask specific questions and listen to the answers. It also calls you to watch behaviors, eating habits, clothing choices, grades, friend groups, and technology use.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance means you show up. Your senior will tell you that you don't have to come or it doesn't matter if you attend or you've already been to plenty of recitals or games. But, attendance matters. There is no substitute for being there.

When your student looks up and sees you in the stands, the theater, or the back of the room, you are telling them they are a priority and what they do is important to you. This time next year, your student could be in college or starting a job or moving away. These moments will become precious memories. Don't miss them!

## ACCEPTANCE

With their future looming uncertain in front of them, your senior needs to know they are accepted. In an environment fueled by comparison and pressure to perform, it can be hard for seniors to figure out who they are and who they want to be.

They may experiment with different career ideas or even decide not to play their sport. Acceptance reminds them of your love and approval. Your student needs to know that you accept them and love them for who they are.

## VISION

Vision takes the focus off the events of today (or this week or even this year) and points to the bigger picture and purpose of their life. It is so easy to get hyper-focused on one test or assignment, one missed opportunity, or one college rejection letter.

You can help your student put events in the right perspective by casting vision for their future. Encourage them to think realistically about how this moment could impact their goals or plans. Share some challenges from your senior year and how it affected you. Help them see the bigger picture.

## FORGIVENESS

Everyone makes mistakes. Seniors tend to make more than the average person—and then they fear the ramifications are greater. That's why forgiveness is an essential gift to give your student.

Forgiveness does not mean that you overlook bad choices or forgo punishment or shield your student from consequences. It does mean that you give them another chance. And another. And another. You don't hold their mistakes against them, leverage them for compliance, or weaponize them for your gain. You love, forgive, teach, and repeat.

## PERMISSION TO REST

The pressure felt by the average high school senior would cripple most adults. They study to earn excellent grades and test scores to gain admission into college. They participate in activities to bolster their resume and play on a team to win a championship. They find a job to gain experience and learn how to budget money. They volunteer in the community to catalog service hours, craft beautiful and clever Insta-stories to maintain an excellent online image, and the list goes on.

Do you know one of the best gifts you can give your senior? Permission to rest. Reassurance that it's okay to take a day off. It's also a good idea to throw in an occasional coffee date, a dance party in the kitchen, and a few extra hours of sleep on a morning when they need it.

## PRAYER

Prayer is not the last thing your high school student needs from you. It should be the priority in the morning, the last thing you do before you close your eyes to sleep, and the over-arching theme of your student's senior year. Unlike you, God sees all and knows all and hears all.

When your student faces intense peer pressure, God can supply courage. When your student is anxious about a test or a date, God can provide comfort and peace. When they are struggling with feelings or fears that they have not even shared or recognized, God can minister to their hurting hearts.

And when you are feeling overwhelmed, unequipped, and heartbroken, God can give you wisdom and remind you that nothing is impossible for Him. You see, prayer is not just something you can give your student. It is a beautiful gift to give yourself, as well.

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*You can do it!*