

Free or Inexpensive Rewards for Parents

Teenagers

1. A gallon of paint is inexpensive. Let the child choose the color and help them paint their room. You can also buy mistake paint (colors that didn't work out for others) and let the child paint a mural on their bedroom wall.
2. Teenagers need extra-curricular activities; however, these activities are expensive. Work out a deal with the karate teacher, horse stable, art teacher, sport coach etc. Offer to provide transportation, house cleaning duties once a month, or precooked meals to get a discount on these classes for your teenager.
3. Teenagers have a difficult time with their emotions. Download yoga lessons from online and do yoga breathing exercises together as a family. Talk to your child about using these techniques when they feel tense at school.
4. Make a deal. If your child maintains the grades you agree upon, does not have any unnecessary absences, and has been agreeable, allow them to take a mental health day and stay home on a day you are home as well. Go window shopping together, fishing, go-kart riding, or whatever would float your child's boat. My mother did this with us when we were children and I still remember these days fondly.
5. Let your teenager play their music during dinner and talk to you about why they like each song that plays.
6. Watch an old black and white classic movie together and talk about how movies have changed. My children loved "Harvey" with Jimmy Stewart when they were teenagers.
7. Write half a story or poem and let your teenager write the other half. Submit the story for publication.
8. Scan your teenager's papers or art work and have them bound in a book ([www. lulu. com](http://www.lulu.com) has inexpensive binding available). Present the book to your teenager at a special dinner.
9. Make a scrap book of your teenager and their friends with ticket stubs and pictures and present at a surprise party.
10. Save your change for a year. Let your teenager choose what to do with that money. One family that I know saved enough to take a family of six to Disneyland.
11. One of the greatest gifts you can give to a teenager is to teach them charity. Sign up to work in a soup kitchen, nursing home, or other similar area and work with them once a month.
12. Organize a neighborhood football or basketball game "oldies" vs "youngsters" or "men" vs. "women" and then have a block barbecue afterwards.
13. Let them drive the "good" car for a special occasion.
14. Surprise them with their favorite dessert for no special reason.
15. Write a story about the 20 things you love about them. Include fun pictures.

16. Choose a family member of the month and make a poster of them. Let them choose Friday night dinners for the month.
17. Teach your children how to play a game like *Spoons*, *Canasta*, *Poker*, etc. and have a family game night.
18. Turn out all the lights in the house and play hide and go seek in the dark. The person that can stay hidden the longest gets to choose the movie the family watches on Saturday night.
19. Hire your child to be an interior decorator and using only items available in the house, redo a room in the house.
20. Do your own *Trading Spaces*. Parents redecorate the teen's bedroom and the teen redecorates the parent's bedroom.
21. Use plastic Easter eggs and put dollar amounts in the eggs on slips of paper and number the eggs with a permanent marker. Play *Deal or No Deal* with one of the parents playing the banker.
22. Help your teenager study for a test by downloading a free *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* PowerPoint game and put the answers to your teenagers' test into the game and then play to help them study.
23. Tape record your student's study questions onto a tape recorder for them so they can listen to them while they are going to sleep.
24. Make flash cards for your student's exams to help them study for a big exam.
25. Help your teenager organize their notebook using color coded folders for each subject and pocket folders for study cards.
26. Hide positive messages all over your teenager's room, in their books they use at home (you don't want them to get embarrassed at school), on their bathroom mirror, etc.
27. Watch *Jeopardy* and give each family member a pad of post it notes or index cards. Have everyone write down what they think the answer is and keep points. The person who wins gets to pick what the family does as an activity that weekend.
28. Do some research for your teenager. For example, if your teen is studying Greek Mythology go to the library and check out all the books on Greek Mythology for them or download some appropriate materials from the Internet (be careful of the Internet as some information is not correct).
29. Take your teen to a museum, on a nature walk, to a sporting event, whatever would float their boat. It's the time you spend with them that is important and there are many free events you can attend.
30. Make a special mix CD for your teen of their favorite songs. You can upload iTunes and then copy their own CD's into the program and mix and match their favorite songs onto one CD so they don't have to flip through CD's to listen to their favorite songs.

31. Have a contest to see who can find something that no one in the family can guess what it is. For example, a shirt stay, or the inside spring to a toy, things that might not be recognizable away from their use.
32. Have everyone come to the table with a quote and then a contest to see who can guess who made the quote famous.
33. Surprise your teen with a scavenger hunt all over the house when they get home from school. Make the clues hard to figure out. I always had a little prize at the end like baseball cards.
34. Let your teen host the training of a guide dog. This will teach them responsibility and give them a sense of pride.
35. Help your teen become a big brother or sister to a child who needs a mentor. There is no greater gift you can give yourself than that of service to someone in need.