Two Questions to Get Your Middle School and High School Kids Off to the Best Start in School

It’s easier to have a conversation about the future that your pre-teen or teenager hasn’t screwed up (yet) than to have one after they have. To do this, tap into their minds and get them to give answers that will help them think ahead, realize actions have consequences and develop judgment. The more judgment they develop that you have confidence in, the less controlling you’ll need to be as a parent and the smoother their adolescence will go for both of you.

**Question 1:** “Which of your friends goes too far and is likely to get into trouble this year? And if they do what kind of trouble are they likely to get into?” If your kid gets suspicious, respond with: “Yeah, I’m just thinking that if that happens they might look to you to help them out and it might be a good idea to know who the person is what they might do, so you can be prepared. I mean, isn’t that what friends are for?”

**Question 2:** “And while we’re on the subject of this year, what are the classes you might need to stay on top of vs. the ones that if you have to, you can get away with doing stuff at the last minute?”

When they answer these questions (or others you come up with using a similar format), don’t give your opinion unless they ask for it. Instead, drill down with sincere curiosity and say things to have them go deeper such as: “Really?” “Tell me more” or “How did you come up with that?” Finally, try to do this when you are driving in the car or doing an activity together as opposed to one of those unsolicited “heart to heart” conversations that teens hate.