

# Social support more important to mothers

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For mothers who feel that they are not in control of certain aspects of life and who are struggling with their relationship to their teenage children, social support may make a great difference. But the same does not seem to apply to fathers in the same situation, a new study published in *Family Process* shows.

"Parenting teenagers is not always easy. We wanted to look at what may make it easier to be a warm and positive parent with appropriate rules for [teenage children](#)," says Terese Glatz, researcher in social work at Örebro University. The study was undertaken in collaboration with colleagues in the US.

The study shows that [parents](#) who feel they are in control of their lives and parenthood are more consistent and better at setting boundaries. Parents with a social support network maintain a warmer relationship with their children compared to parents who are more isolated. The sense of control and a social network thus affect parents in different ways.

The next step of the study involved researchers taking a closer look at what can be done to help parents who feel that they are not in control of their lives. That is when they discovered a difference between mothers and fathers.

"A social support network proved to be a help to mothers in their parenting role. The support may involve help of a practical nature, such as baby sitting, as well as emotional support in the sense of having

somebody who listens to you when you are having a hard time. For mothers who feel they are not in control of their lives, social support can help them build a better relationship with their children."

"Social support in times when you feel you are not in control, may help reduce stress and mothers are able to act in a more positive way towards their children," says Terese Glatz.

But for the fathers in the study who expressed a sense of not being in control of their lives, [social support](#) did not help the situation.

"Therefore, we need to focus our efforts in different directions for mothers and fathers who are having a hard time. Support activities for [fathers](#) may perhaps need to focus specifically on how they can regain a sense of [control](#), while the efforts in helping [mothers](#) may entail support in expanding their social network."

**More information:** Melissa A. Lippold et al. Parental Perceived Control and Social Support: Linkages to Change in Parenting Behaviors During Early Adolescence, *Family Process* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/famp.12283](#)

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