

13 Tips for Parenting Your Teen

By: Elinor Robin, PhD

My mother would say that being a parent is the hardest job on the planet. Certainly it's the only job you can't quit or get fired from. And, there's no pay -- at least not in actual money. Instead, the way parenting works is that you, the parent, pour yourself into the universe surrounding this little being for about twenty years. Slowly, he or she hatches out of the environment you created, and goes on to do things his or her own way. If you see his way as a rejection or diminishing of what you believe is best and true, parenting may become your most frustrating life experience. On the other hand, parenting can be a very rewarding experience if you accept (even when you don't agree with) your child and her decisions. This acceptance can be especially difficult during your child's teenage years. Here are thirteen tips to make it easier to parent your teen.

1. Get adult support. Most parents need to vent, but your kid is not the one you should be venting to. Instead, find an adult who will listen without judgment and without trying to fix you or your problems.
2. Don't be your child's friend. Your teen will have many friends in his lifetime, but only one mother and one father. If you are your child's friend today and tomorrow you try to set limits, you will become a traitor. So stay out of the friend category.
3. Have her attention before you speak. If you are too busy to stop what you are doing and just yell from the next room it is likely that your teenager will be too busy to stop what she is doing to listen to you. Instead, if you want her to hear you, look her in the eye and say, "I need to talk to you." Likewise, your teen is guaranteed to listen if you tell him, "I want to tell you something that I have never said before." Of course, this has to be an honest assessment. You cannot use this line and then say the same old stuff.
4. Ask yourself -- "If I was my child how would I be feeling?"
5. The goal is to influence your teen, not control him. There is a difference between control and influence. Control is imposed from the outside. Influence operates internally.
6. Do not fight with a teenager. Even if you win, you lose. If you allow your child to push you into a fight or an angry reaction, you are allowing him to control you. The end result is that you lose power.
7. You cannot order your child to be happy or safe. These are the two things most of us want most for our children. And, sadly, we have little control over either one. Accepting this reality makes it easier to accept your child's choices and actions.

"The goal is to influence your teen, not control him. There is a difference between control and influence. Control is imposed from the outside. Influence operates internally."



8. Give your child freedom within expanding limits. Growing up is a process, not an event. You and your teen don't have to get it 100% right today. In fact, making mistakes along the way prepares a child for a time when Mom and Dad won't be there to set the boundaries.
9. Catch your child doing something right. At least once a day point out to your child something that he is doing right or well.
10. Be supportive. A good way to show your kids that you support them is to avoid giving advice and ask questions instead.
11. If you aren't going to talk to your child about sexuality find another family member who is up to the task. It's your job to ensure that your child receives accurate information. (I said accurate information, not value judgments. We pass our values on to little children. By the time they are teens their values are in place.)
12. The word discipline comes from the root disciple. Your children are your disciples and your role is to lead them. As a leader you should follow the basic rules of leadership including:

“The word discipline comes from the root disciple. Your children are your disciples and your role is to lead them.”

- Display mutual respect.
- Negotiate and layout rules and consequences in advance. (Whenever possible, natural and logical consequences are best.)
- Expect to be tested.
- Use discipline to teach, not to punish.

13. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being engaging and mellow and 10 being critical and irritated, many parents begin each day at about 7. If you start the day at 7, your child will respond with 7.

Parenting is about witnessing a transformation. As your child moves through the teenage phase of his life he is like the butterfly that must thrash around to strengthen its wings before leaving the cocoon. It may not be easy to watch but when you signed up for parenting you made a long-term commitment. So, relax and know that this too shall pass.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elinor-robin-phd/13-tips-for-parenting-you_b_8677476.html?utm_hp_ref=parents-teens

