



Living with Teenagers

Teenagers often get bad press yet we were all teenagers once. How many of us can honestly say we were delightful to our parents, unfailingly polite and appreciative, readily complying with all their demands and timescales, keeping our rooms tidy and thanking them for their undying love, support, lifts, supply of money, home cooking ...?

Being the parent or carer, of a teenager isn't always easy!
Here are some tried and tested tips to help you with your teenager...

<p>Separate your teenager from the behaviour. Talk about their behaviour, not them as a person. This avoids labelling your teenager as "silly", "dangerous", "rude" etc. whilst allowing you to express displeasure with the behaviour. Love the person but dislike the behaviour.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "That was a silly thing to do, it was dangerous" (not "Don't be so silly")</p> <p>Say, "Spitting is unhygienic and unpleasant" (not "You are disgusting")</p> <p>Say, "Swearing is not acceptable" (not "You are so rude")</p>
<p>Use "I" language. Talk about yourself. This is far harder to argue with and does not apportion blame. The third example works well because you take the blame so it's less likely to result in a confrontation.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "I find it difficult to hear/talk when the music is so loud" (not "You are making me annoyed" or "You are making it difficult for me to work")</p> <p>Say, "I am disappointed that you did not do your homework/feed the cat. Is there a reason?" (not "Why didn't you do your homework/etc.?.")</p>
<p>"Please" and "Thank You" When asking your</p>	<p>For example, Say, "Shoes off, thank you"</p>

<p>son to do something, use please and thank you.</p> <p>This works because it is a polite request. Using a command opens up opportunities for confrontation! Ending a request with, "Thank you" assumes it will be done ...</p>	<p>Say, "Please would you do me a favour and pick that up? Thanks."</p>
<p>Assume they will do what you ask and allow 'take-up' time. Make the request and take your attention off your teenager. Say what you want and walk away.</p> <p>It might take a minute or two for them to follow through. Again, it is less confrontational.</p> <p>In a while, check they have done it without making it obvious and ask again quietly if necessary.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "Would you mind putting your plates in the sink? Thanks."</p>
<p>Catch them being good. Sometimes, it is more effective to ignore poor behaviour and give praise for something they are doing well simultaneously. Notice when they do behave well.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "I'm impressed by the way you organised your desk. Could you get me your washing now please?"</p> <p>Say, "I liked the way you came down for dinner as soon as I called you. Sit down now, please".</p> <p>Say, "I noticed how you helped your sister with her French today, thanks".</p>
<p>Allow choicesor the illusion of choice! This will make your teenager feel more in control and often works wonders.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "Do you want to get your homework done now or would you like a snack first?"</p> <p>Say, "Would you prefer to visit Gran on Saturday or Sunday?"</p> <p>Say, "Do you want to tidy up first or shall I change the bed first?"</p>
<p>Say what you WANT, not what you don't want. Evidence suggests that the more you tell a young person off for poor behaviour, the more they will repeat that behaviour. Focus on the desired behaviour.</p>	<p>For example, Say, "Please come downstairs in a minute so we can talk properly" (not, "Don't shout down the stairs")</p> <p>Say, "Please hang the wet towels up to dry" (not, "Don't leave wet towels on the bathroom floor")</p>
<p>NEVER, EVER be drawn into acting like a teenager and NEVER be rude or sarcastic</p>	<p>This allows you to say, "I am treating you with respect and I expect you to treat me in the</p>

	same way”.
Use the format, ‘When you ..., I felt ... I would prefer it if ...’	For example, Say, “When you arrive home over an hour later than we agreed last night, I felt so worried. I’d prefer it if you called or texted so I knew you were safe”.
Use the broken record technique. Say it and say it again and say it again. Say it in the same calm tone of voice and at the same volume.	
Deal with the main issue and stick to it. Ignore secondary behaviours; if you are dealing with arriving home later than agreed, talk about that and resist bringing up other issues such as not getting work done, the mess in the bathroom, swearing ...	
Avoid threats, especially empty ones. If you say it, you must carry it through or you will find the boundaries are pushed further and further.	
Avoid the triggers Work out when/where the behaviour goes wrong and change the situation. If you notice that your teenager is grumpy before eating, don’t ask them to tidy their room before dinner!	