



## Five Secrets for Success With Teenagers

Psychiatrist, Foster W. Cline, M.D., offers the following guidelines for parents of teens. While they won't guarantee trouble-free relationships, over time they can help parent and teens more fully enjoy each other.

1. Give as few rules as possible. As children grow older, they need fewer, not more rules. An unhappy 16-year-old exclaimed, *"When I was little I didn't have to let my parents know where I was every minute"* The parents of this girl were making a typical mistake. When she curved out. They clamped down!
2. Give your teenagers rules and orders that you can enforce. Parents are left powerless when they make rules that cannot be enforced. This typically happens when a teen is grounded and refuses to follow the order. Grounding is usually an ineffective consequence.

The only rules we can "force" a teen to follow are those that directly affect us. A rule that forbids marijuana smoking, for example, may be disregarded, but a rule that forbids marijuana on the premises *will* be followed.

3. Keep the lines of communication open. This is often difficult to put into practice. But our children *will* talk to us when we follow the example of a good therapist.

A therapist listens carefully and makes absolutely sure he or she understand the child. A therapist rarely gives orders, and always lets the child make decisions. Finally, a therapist gives the child a strong message which says, *"I may not think what you're doing is great, but as a person you're all right."*

4. Encourage adolescents to show their autonomy by being different. Healthy teens express their individuality in non-destructive ways. For example, some boys wear a single earring. When parents get upset, it's just what the teen wants, since he is trying hard to prove he is different.

Most changes in appearance are not self-destructive. But if the teenager is irresponsible, negative or angry, there are more important problems to worry about.

5. Keep life consequential for the adolescent. Wise parents make sure



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problem behavior affects their teens directly. Then, they express empathy instead of anger. Here are some ways this can be done:

- \* Wise parents pay for "good guy" auto insurance. Teens pay the difference when their insurance increases because of their irresponsible behavior.
- \* Wise parents do not support illegal behavior by bailing their children out of detention or paying attorney fees!
- \* Wise parents expect their teens to do chores, treat them with respect and maintain average grades. Other than that, teens' lives should be their own.

### **Tip of the Day**

Few Rules and Open Communication Lines Equal More Enjoyment for Teens and Parents.

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