



Principally Speaking

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

TRYING ON NEW HATS—WHY TEENS REBEL

Some teenagers seem to change their values weekly and even daily. If they believe what their parents believe, it means they are not individuals! Some teens have radar that picks up which values are most important to us and then they abandon those values. Wise parents recognize that it's normal for adolescents to "try on new hats" (new values). They also know this rebellion is not permanent.

The following are ways to "release" your teen from certain values and prevent them from becoming permanent:

- 1. Don't criticize what your teen says.**
When parents criticize, teens feel they must clamp on to certain values for dear life to prove their individuality!
- 2. You can't force change.** The best way to guarantee someone does not change is to order them to change! With teens, this only makes them intensify their behavior to prove they're OK. Then we may have locked them into the value—permanently.
- 3. Practice saying, "Thanks for sharing."**
When his son told him that nothing was wrong with adultery, a wise father responded with, "*Thanks for sharing that. I wondered how teenagers saw that issue.*" He then went on to say, "*I can understand how a teenager could see it that way.*"

When a parent simply says, "*Thanks for sharing that.*" a teen has no need to hang on to the value. They can eventually discard it and move on!

- 4. Don't tell teens they are wrong.** The fastest way to make an enemy is to tell someone they are wrong. It works every time! A wise salesman once said, "*You can't make someone mad and sell them something at the same time!*" Parents may wonder why they can't "sell" their teens on their beliefs or values.

The answer lies in the way parents communicate with their children when they talk about values the two don't share. Parents who listen, without anger, cause teens to talk themselves out of the value.

- 5. It's okay for teens to make mistakes.**
Einstein said the way to become a genius is to make lots of mistakes and learn from them in a short period of time. Our children need more practice experiencing the consequences of their mistakes and actions and then experiencing our empathy—rather than our anger.

As much as we would like to prevent our teens from making the same mistakes we made growing up, it never works. They simply say, "*Let me make my own mistakes!*"

It helps to look back and remember how much we learned in life from those valuable mistakes we were allowed to make.

Teens Abandon Our Values When They Decide To Find Out Who They Are.