

DISCIPLINE

Limits & boundaries are set to keep your children safe & teach them about the rights of others

When your young person was small you set limits and boundaries to keep him or her safe and also to teach him or her about the rights of others. Now that you have an adolescent the purpose of limits has broadened to include identity formation. He or she is trying to work out who they are, and what they are capable of doing.



This identity formation involves an element of risk, but needs to occur within an open field of choices. A young person sorts through choices, tries a few and embraces some. This is how they learn who they are. Their identity formation is their greatest asset.

The focus of limit-setting should be on kids' needs, not your parental control needs. The best defence against making bad decisions is to develop good decision-making skills. The best decision-making scenario is a cooperative one between parents and teenagers, when they can feel comfortable discussing choices, and where they incorporate some older, wiser parenting views. You have probably noticed that this doesn't happen all that often, as many decisions become 'your way' or 'my way'.

Teenagers often learn more about decision-making and identity formation from a bad decision made well, than if he or she makes a decision parents want or that they think is 'right'. He or she will learn more from being allowed to choose poorly. He can learn about such things

as the virtues of delaying gratification, the advantages of proper research, and even the advantages of heeding advice.

USE CONSEQUENCES TO PROMOTE RESPONSIBILITY

Teenagers need guidance and direction to learn what is okay. The use of consequences helps young people take responsibility for their behaviour and learn to stick within the agreed limits. Spell out the consequences for breaking the rules so your young person can monitor their actions and take responsibility for their behaviour.

The manner in which consequences are used is essential. Be calm, be pleasant, and be dispassionate when you use them. You want young people to be mad at themselves, not at you. If you are angry or implement consequences in a vindictive manner young people will more than likely be angry with you, not themselves.

It's not necessarily what you do and say but how you do and say things that make the difference with your success with adolescents.

SOME TIPS ABOUT SETTING CONSEQUENCES FOR ADOLESCENTS:

TIP 1: SEPARATE THE FACT-FINDING FROM SETTING THE CONSEQUENCE

Judges are smart. They find an offender guilty one day and bring them back for sentencing on another day. They separate the emotion of the trial from the objectivity of sentencing. If you issue consequences on the spot, you may end up with a poor consequence, or you may even rescind it.

TIP 2: CONSIDER GIVING PROBATION FOR FIRST OFFENCES.

Be forgiving of first offences and consider a probation or warning of consequences to follow if poor behaviour continues. Kids will consider compassion a strength, not a weakness.

TIP 3: AVOID LIFE SENTENCES

Judges are loathe to give life sentences as they give no hope or incentive for improved behaviour. Ban a teenager from a going out for two weeks rather



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than leaving the duration open-ended. Set a time-frame for the consequences and remember that parents shouldn't go overboard with consequences.

TIP 4: DON'T ACQUIESCE TO TERRORISM

If your teen issues a threat saying something like, "There is no way you can make me come home at eleven o'clock," be calm and don't rise to the bait. Deflect it by saying, "We'll talk about this tomorrow." Don't give into the threats of running away or non-cooperation. "I

hope you don't run away. It's great having you at home. I want what is best for you." Avoid saying what you would love to say, which maybe something like, "Yeah, try running away. You wouldn't last inside two days before you are back here begging for a good feed and comfortable bed!!"

KEEP IN MIND

1. Both parents, if applicable, should agree to rules and consequences otherwise young people can play one parent off against another.
2. If you are unsure of whether the limits you set are reasonable, then talk with other parents.
3. When you make a mistake then apologise and restore your relationships. Teenagers admire their parents' sense of humanity.




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