

The Dooley
Corporation Presents

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

Natural Behaviors of our
New Age Children

-David Dooley-



- **How to Deal With a Disrespectful Teenager: Tips for Frustrated Parents**

PARENTS GUIDE

Are you dealing with a disrespectful teenager?

Maybe he mutters under his breath when you ask him to do his homework.

Or maybe she slams her bedroom door when you tell her she can't go out with her friends.

If so, you're probably at your wits' end.

You love your teenagers and you want the best for them.

But you also want them to accept that there are rules in your family, just as there are rules in the outside world.

Don't be alarmed. Disrespect towards parents is common as youngsters navigate the waters between childhood and adulthood.

But you can't deal with disrespect by simply ignoring it.

1. Understand the teenage brain. The part of the brain that weighs outcomes, forms judgments, and controls impulses and emotions hasn't been properly connected yet. What does this mean in practice? It means teenagers can get frustrated easily, with themselves and with external situations. It makes them impulsive and subject to mood swings that you and I don't experience. Understanding that there's a biological basis for your teenager's difficult behavior makes it much easier to deal with. It helps you to focus on the behavior rather than the person

2. Think about the emotional needs underlying the behavior. When teenagers are disrespectful to their parents, it's sometimes a sign that they have emotional needs that aren't being met. Sometimes the disrespectful behavior is a way of getting attention. Other times, it's an indication that they don't feel accepted. Sit down with your teenager and tell her that you're there for her if she wants to talk about something. Remind her that you love her unconditionally. Keep in mind that adolescents often feel powerless. As part of the process of growing up, teenagers need to differentiate themselves from their parents. This often takes the form of adopting views that are radically different from yours. Another important part of teenage development is establishing emotional autonomy. This usually involves taking back some of the power from their parents. The most common way to do this is for the teenager to challenge the rules through conflict and confrontation. While it may not entirely solve the problem, understanding the emotional needs underlying your teenager's behavior will help you to empathize with him.

3. Be a role model. The most important thing you can do is model the kind of behavior you want to see in your teenager. It's amazing how many parents call their children disrespectful and then model the very behavior they're criticizing. Remember, your children are constantly watching you as a role model. If you want your teenagers to be respectful towards you, you need to adopt a respectful attitude towards them, towards your spouse, and towards people outside the family. This is especially important when your teenager is testing boundaries.

4. Understand that your teenager is developing independence. Severe disrespect towards parents should never be tolerated. But it's important to understand that some level of disrespect is part of the process of growing up and developing independence. Examples of this kind of disrespect might be eye-rolling, unnecessary remarks, or ignored requests. Children grow up in an environment where the balance of power lies with the parents. Surrounded by rules and expectations, children tend to feel powerless. Talking back and other forms of mild disrespect are simply ways for your teenager to feel as if he's taking back some of that power. It's a natural process: your teenager is learning to express himself and to have his own ideas. And developing independence is a vital aspect of growing up.

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The teenage years are challenging, both for teenagers and their parents.

And disrespectful teenage behavior is one of the most troubling issues for parents to deal with.

The tips in this article will help you navigate these difficult waters.

In particular, target the behavior and not the person, and develop an understanding of the teenage brain and how it shapes your teenager's behavior.

Focus on one tip at a time. When you have that aspect under control, implement another tip.

Gradually, you'll see an improvement in your teenager's behavior – and family life will become more harmonious!

6. Set clear and consistent boundaries. One of the most common causes of disrespect in teenagers is the absence of boundaries. Children who have been spoilt or allowed to have their own way often become disrespectful teenagers. In families where there are very few firm rules, disrespect amongst teenagers is almost inevitable. Families in which the parents do have rules for kids' behavior but apply them inconsistently are also likely to produce disrespectful teenagers. Inconsistency can also arise where two parents apply different rules. For example, one parent might insist on no more than an hour of screen time in the evenings while the other parent imposes no time limit at all. Here are two reasons why inconsistent rules contribute to the problem of disrespectful teenagers: Where one parent is lax and the other is strict, teenagers learn to exploit the inconsistency and play one parent against the other. Where a parent is lax on some days and strict on others, teenagers can use the inconsistency to question the rules. So it's important that parents set clear rules and boundaries and apply them consistently. Whenever possible, discuss these boundaries with your teenager before they're set.

7. If you set consequences, follow through on them. While it's a good idea to acknowledge your teenager's good behavior, sometimes you may have to set consequences for their bad behavior. If you do, it's important to follow through on these consequences. A common mistake parents make is to threaten consequences in the heat of the moment and then fail to act on them. Believe it or not, teenagers are looking for boundaries. They want to know where the boundaries are – that's why they test the boundaries. When you follow through on consequences, your teenager feels safer because she knows where the boundaries are. She learns to trust you because she knows you stand by your word. But most importantly, she learns that the behavior in question is not acceptable. Here are some tips on setting consequences for bad behavior: Make the consequences short term, not long term. When the consequence is short term, the teenager has a chance to learn quickly and move on. Don't make the consequences too harsh. Don't add punitive statements (such as "I told you this was going to happen") to the consequence. Let the consequence speak for itself. Punitive statements will arouse feelings of anger and resentment in the teenager instead of allowing her to focus on the bad behavior and its consequences.

8. Don't make it personal. When dealing with a disrespectful teenager, it's easy to get caught up in your own emotions. When you do that, you're likely to make it personal. But that's a mistake, because what you need to be focusing on is the behavior, not the person. When you focus on the behavior and not the person, it makes it easier for everyone to stay calm. It allows both you and your teenager to avoid getting emotional.

9. Avoid unnecessary arguments. Engaging in an argument with a disrespectful teenager is rarely going to have a positive outcome. Arguments have a tendency to escalate and get out of control. When we get angry we say things we later regret. Instead, stay calm and remember that you want to focus on the behavior and not get into a power struggle. But this isn't always easy, because adolescents experience a whirlwind of emotions. Remember that as an adult you're better able to control your emotions than your teenager. It's an advantage you should put to good use.

10. Avoid using "you are." and "you should" statements When confronting your teenager about unacceptable behavior, avoid making statements such as: "You are such a selfish/lazy/uncooperative/rude person." Also avoid making statements such as: "You should stop using your phone so much/work harder/pay attention in class/be more responsible." Remember, you want to focus on the behavior instead of casting judgment on your teenager. Use statements that focus specifically on the behavior, such as: "When you ignore my requests/shout at me, I feel disrespected."



Whether it's an argument with your child or a disagreement with your partner, using positive problem-solving skills to sort things out helps to keep you calm. It also gives your child a great example to follow.

Before you get into conflict over your child's behavior, ask yourself, 'Does this really matter?' and 'Is this really worth fighting about?' Less negative feedback means fewer opportunities for conflict and bad feelings.

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When you follow through on promises, good or bad, your child learns to trust and respect you. Be clear and consistent, and promise only what you know you can deliver.

11. Cell Phone Use. Use of communication devices and social media is not bad. In fact, it is necessary for teens to have a mobile phone so that parents can keep a track of their whereabouts. However, the use of these devices can turn into an addiction and affect your kid's lifestyle and attitude. Social media can open doors for strangers who may want to take undue advantage of your naive teenager, which can be dangerous. **SOLUTION:** Not giving your teenager a mobile phone or completely cutting off social media access is not a good idea. In fact, it may backfire and lead to stealing, hiding, and lying. It is common for teens to own a mobile phone. Get them one but have strict rules about what they use it for. Monitor how they use the Internet – keep a tab on their browsing history if possible. Have an open arrangement about it so that you don't have to check on them behind their back. Also, encourage them to talk about what they do online, by being friendly and open to their ideas and interests. Another way to deal with this issue is to have restrictions on time spent on texting and calling their friends or on social media when they are at home.

12. Drug, Alcohol, and Sex. Teens are increasingly indulging in alcohol, drugs, and sex long before they reach the legal age. Don't be surprised if you find that your 15 or 16-year-old has started to drink socially and is sexually active. If you find that your child's friends and classmates are also indulging in such activities, then it is safe to assume that it is "normal" teen behavior, and not a physical or mental illness. It is easy to get addicted to these vices. Substance abuse can often lead to depression, liver failure, and other chronic diseases. **SOLUTION:** As a parent, do not approve these activities but at the same time, do not panic and react instantly. Kids could take to alcohol early on due to violence or abuse at home, parent's divorce or sheer peer pressure. One of the most effective ways to prevent alcohol or drug abuse is to talk about it. Talk to your teenager calmly and explain why they shouldn't be indulging in drugs, alcohol, or sex early in their life. Avoid an accusing tone when you bring up the issue, and try to be friendly. Experts also say that teens, who eat dinner regularly with their parents, participate in after-school activities and are not allowed to wander around late at night, have a significantly lower risk of becoming involved in these situations.

13. Spending More Time With Friends. Teenagers' sense of identity is based on who they hang out with. If they seem to be spending more time with their friends instead of with you at home, it is because they want to fit in, which is typical teenager behavior. The problem is when your teen spends more time with people you do not approve of (not that your teen cares about your approval), or with people who you think can influence your teen negatively. **SOLUTION:** You may not like your teenager's friends because of their appearance or because of their attitude. If it is appearance, remember that is not always a good idea to judge a book by its cover. Take the time to know your child's friends before rejecting them. If you think that you are not happy with the kids' attitude, you may want to bring that to your teenager's notice in a subtle way. Gently share your concerns in a non-judgemental way whilst telling your teenager that you trust them to make the right decision. This will encourage them to review the friendships they are choosing and not feel pressured into making their own choices. Remember that building a network outside of the family unit is a normal part of a teenager developing more independence.

14. Communication. Telling your child honestly how his behavior affects you can help your relationship. 'I' statements can be a big help here. For example, saying 'I really worry when you don't come home on time' will probably get a better response than 'You know you're supposed to ring me after school!'