

## **Keeping Your Cool When Parenting Your Teen**

Adolescence is a difficult time for young people. During those years, your child is facing physical changes in their bodies during puberty, increased peer pressure, exploring their own character and values, exposure to drugs, alcohol, and sexual relationships, and increased expectations and scrutiny from school. You may have found that parenting during these years has becoming increasingly harder. You may be experiencing outright rebellion against family rules and values from your teen which may be pushing your buttons.

Many parents control their emotions most of the time. However, push back from your teen may be causing you to lose your temper more often than you would like to admit. Losing your temper is not an effective way to solve an issue. Once you lose your cool in an argument with your child, the problem is often forgotten and goes unsolved with an added layer of anger and resentment clouding the issue. Your teen must understand that learning how to solve problems and manage emotions is an important life skill and is one of the primary tasks of adolescence.

Here are some helpful tips that will help you keep your cool:

- Organize your thoughts ahead of time, before starting the conversation. Think about the language you are using and how you are talking to your teen.
- Breathe. If you find yourself losing your temper, take a moment to collect yourself and your emotions.
- Mean what you say without being mean. Direction that makes the most impact on a child is actually one that is stern and clear. Speak concisely to get your point across. The calmer your tone, the the more impact your words will have. Your child will understand what you are trying to articulating, and you won't have to lose your voice trying to convey it.
- Have clear rules and follow through. Not carrying out realistic consequences to rule breaking will result in your child testing you. Commit to following through with your word if rules have been broken.
- Ask your child to use their own words to describe what was talked about and what will happen next. This reinforces the message and makes sure that it was understood.

Remember that your goal is to maintain a healthy parent-child relationship during your children's teen years. Educate yourself about adolescent development. Through education, you will be able to understand what behaviors to expect, and you will be able to prepare for parenting challenges. Additionally, remembering yourself as an adolescent and looking back at your own teen years and remembering your own moods, risk-taking activities, and attitudes toward your parents and adults can help you understand your teen's behavior. Lastly, including your child in discussions involving setting rules and establishing consequences for breaking them may increase the chance your teen will respect his or her boundaries most of the time. Your teen will learn that rights and

responsibilities go hand in hand. Give your child increasing responsibility for his or her well-being and family.

It is important to always use positive reinforcement when disciplining your child. Criticism and excessive punishment, including words that belittle, can hurt a teen's self-esteem, thereby increasing rebellious behavior. When warmth, kindness, consistency, and love characterize parent-child communication, the relationship will flourish, as will self-esteem, cooperation, and respect.

It is important to know when your teen needs extra help from a mental health professional. Early intervention is crucial in reducing the damage serious problems might cause. Signs your child might need additional help include:

- Spending a lot of time alone
- Sudden drop in school performance
- Drastic mood swings or changes in behavior
- Separation from longtime friends
- Lack of interest in hobbies or social and recreational activities
- Drug or alcohol abuse

If talking with your child doesn't improve the situation, seek support and guidance from school resources or mental health professionals.

Remember, no one is perfect. No matter how hard we all try, we all sometimes slip up, lose our cool, and raise our voices. That's okay, as long as you know how to make it right. Once you've calmed down after getting upset, explain that you did not mean to raise your voice or get mad. Explain why you got angry, as your child to try to do better, and convey that you will try to do better, too.

All information contained in the article was referenced from:

<http://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=keeping-your-cool-when-parenting-teens-1-2839>

<https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/temper-temper-keeping-your-cool-when-kids-push-your-buttons/>

<http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/discipline/tips/ways-to-stop-yelling/>