

## **TEEN-PARENT PROBLEMS**

### **SOME COMMON AREAS OF CONCERN AND CONFLICT**

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#### **1. Conflict over need for autonomy and independence.**

- Rebelliousness to parental authority.
- Defiance.
- Withdrawn behavior.
- Irritable moods.
- Peer over-identification.
- Risk taking behaviors.

#### **2. Sexuality and Intimacy.**

- Falling love, crushes & infatuations.
- Dating/Affairs.
- Sexual experimentation leading to sexual behaviors and activity.
- Clash of sexual values.

#### **3. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use.**

- Experimentation with drinking and smoking and even illicit drugs.
- Parents as models for such behavior.
- As stress coping methods.
- As defiance of parental values.
- Due to peer pressure, group acceptance.

#### **4. Academic/School problems.**

- Stress of academics.
- Parental expectations in performance.

- Undesirable/violent behaviors in school.
- Difficulty in coping with study subjects.
- Association with ‘bad company’.
- Indiscipline in classroom.

#### **5. Discipline issues/Anti-social behaviors.**

- Disregard for family rules/social customs.
- Aggressive behaviors & violence.
- Lying and cheating.
- Stealing.
- Fighting.
- Destruction of property.
- Truancy.
- Methods of discipline adopted – kinds of punishment used.
- Limit setting.

### **HOW TO RELATE TO YOUR TEENAGERS SOME GENERAL TIPS**

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- **Remember and recall your own crazy teenage years.** Didn't you as a teenager indulge in some unruly behavior, or naughtiness, experimentation of various kinds yourself? So why expect your child to always be prim and proper? Learn to accept some occasional misbehavior as a part of growing up years, as long as they do not become habitual and repeatedly troublesome.

- **Learn to listen** — only then can you form a connection. As parents you need to slip into a listening mode more often than a speaking mode. Listen to what your teenager has to say without preconceived notions of what he or she is going to do. Listen without forming instant judgment and frequent interruptions.
- **Resist from lecturing/preaching** — learn to talk instead. Don't let your communication process with your teenager be a one-way process – you doing all the talking! Initiate a dialogue rather than hold a monologue from a moral high ground.
- **Be patient** — Children do see reason in your stand eventually and give up 'being a rebel without a cause'. Most of the time being argumentative and acting deliberately stubborn or difficult is only a teenager's need to assert his/her independence or individuality. Keeping your cool and being patient pays huge dividends as he/she will probably give in, or give up the battle with you and come around to some reasoning.
- **Pick and choose your battles** — loud music, playing for extra hours, wearing funky clothes, sporting a new hairstyle, skipping a bath etc. are the wrong fights. Be firm on issues that matter like drinking and smoking. Learn to say 'No' for the right reasons. Limit setting is important. Minor issues related to discipline can be negotiated but major ones that can potentially harm the well-being of your child both physically or psychologically should be non-negotiable. These could include use of alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis or other illicit drugs; skipping meals repeatedly; sleeping too little or too much; prolonged use of Internet or Gaming activities at the cost of sleep or studies; staying out late or other such similar issues.
- **Be an intelligent parent** — be well informed, talk, discuss, read, surf about teenage issues. Being armed with knowledge of adolescent growth and development concerns, findings from research studies on adolescence in the lay press, teen trends and activities that are prevailing would all certainly add to your ability of dealing with the challenges of parenting teenagers.
- **Don't be afraid to touch 'taboo' topics** — At least you will find out what you already 'knew'. However difficult it may appear to broach issues related to your teenagers behaviors regarding sexuality such as puberty, sexual knowledge, their activities related to

heterosexual friendships and attraction, sexual curiosity and experimentation, dating, their attempts to try out addictive substances, their activities related to their Internet surfing -- all need to be addressed sooner or later, before they turn into troublesome misadventures!

- **Maintain Your Expectations** — Teens generally are unhappy with expectations you place on them and may feel that they are being pushed too hard at times. However, they usually understand and need to know that you care enough about them to expect certain things such as good grades, acceptable behavior, and adherence to the rules of the house. If you have appropriate and realistic expectations, your teenager will likely try to meet them.
- **Spend exclusive time with your teen** — Communicate on a daily basis by conversing, chatting, finding about his/her activities, changing patterns of interests, friendships, school-related matters and other similar concerns. Bond with them by indulging in taking time out to do something or go somewhere special where both of you can let your guard down and relate in friendly manner.
- **Befriend and Respect – Be a Facilitator.** Respect your teenager and avoid yelling or punishing the teenagers for every small mistake. Every mistake that your teenager commits is an opportunity for you to converse and teach him the importance of doing the right thing and making the right choices. Instead of imposing rigorous rules and restrictions, which the teenager is bound to rebel against, try and make decisions and set rules with mutual consent and understanding. Do not try to dominate, or dictate terms with teenagers, instead be their friend and work things out together.
- **Respect your teen's need for privacy**— **Most** of you, understandably, may have a very hard time with this one. You may feel that anything your teenager does, it is your business to know and it is healthy to keep an eye on them all the time. But it is not necessarily so. To help your teen become a young adult, you'll need to grant some privacy. If you notice warning signs of trouble, then you can invade your teen's privacy until you get to the heart of the problem. But otherwise, it's a good idea to back off. In other words, you don't have to monitor your teenager's activities even when you have been told about them. Phone calls can be private. You also shouldn't expect your teen to share all thoughts or activities with you at all times. Of course, for safety reasons, you should always know where teens are going, what they're doing, and with whom, but you don't need to know every detail.

- **Be a good role model yourself** — you need to go no further. It is only natural that your teenagers will consciously or subconsciously look up to you as their role models, so make sure you are not sending any contradictory signals by not doing what you preach!
- **Work on your anger**— If you lose it, it's not a bad idea to apologize and make up with him/her.
- **Develop a sense of humor**— Don't take your parenting role too seriously all the time. Look at some things from a different perspective. Teenagers can be very entertaining — if you see the funny side!
- **Be kind to yourself** — Don't attempt to be the perfect parent all the time. You can make mistakes too!