

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

March/April 2024

N F A P A

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR TEEN'S SELF-ESTEEM WHEN LIFE PUSHES THEM DOWN

Written by: *parentingteensandtweens*

Any parent of an adolescent knows a teenager's self-esteem is a fragile thing.

And as a social worker in the foster care space, I know firsthand that helping teens develop a strong sense of inner strength and a positive self-image – whether they are your biological child or foster child – is often one of the most difficult challenges faced by a parent.

Even when a youth has the foundation of a supportive family, the reality is that being a teenager can be challenging. Today's adolescents are dealing with a myriad of issues, including bullying, body image, academic pressures, violence in schools, social media, and peer pressure, all of which can impact a teen's self-esteem and mental health.

This is where a few tried and true parenting skills can make a difference and equip your teen with the tools to build their self-esteem and ensure they develop into healthy, high-functioning individuals.

How does self-esteem develop?

At about two to three years of age, the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) begins to develop, and the brain begins to understand how others see us. By the time a child reaches the

age of five, they realize two people can have differing views of them, and that each perspective can be correct.

For example, telling them, "You're a good student," activates the mPFC in their brain and they respond positively regardless of their grades or test scores. As they become adolescents, the mPFC activated response is developed, and their ability to form contextual opinions is established.

The bottom line is that positive or negative self-judgements are formed based on childhood experiences (Dr. R. J. Jackson, October 2021)

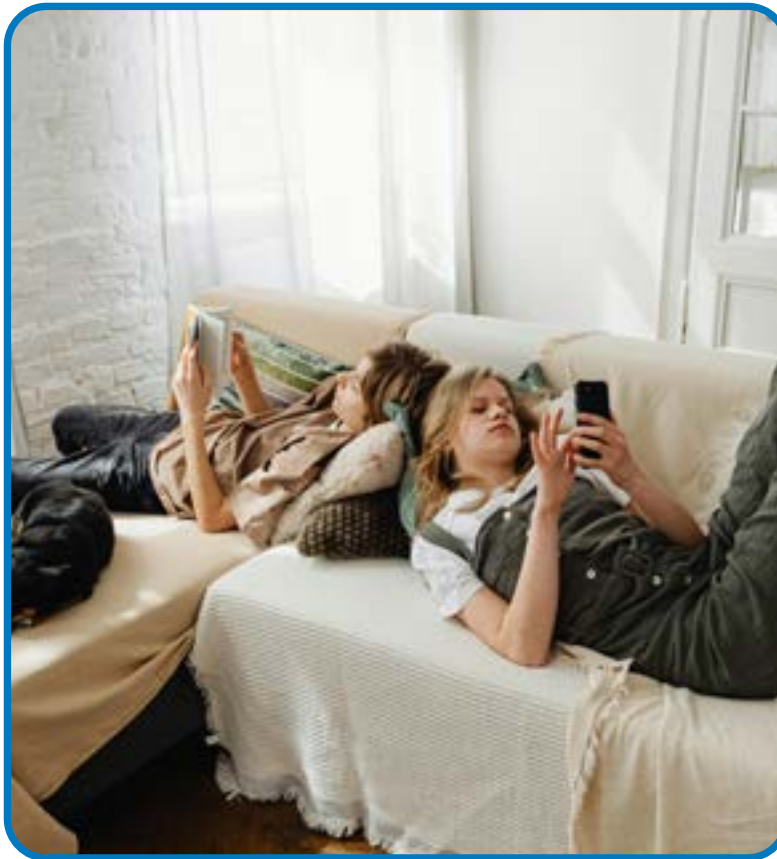
What does this have to do with teen self-esteem?

A teen's tendency to either be secure or critical of themselves is formed in their early years. Sometimes, the childhood experiences that create a sense of self-worth are compromised when basic needs are not met, or when trauma or instability permeates their understanding of the world.

Low self-esteem can be particularly hard for all young people, but it can be expounded for teens in

times of transition like starting a new school and forming new friendships and relationships, and especially for teens experiencing foster care. Negative thoughts can start to creep in and become pervasive in their developing brain.

A teen's self-image is easily swayed by the way they see themselves, how well they're doing in school, their exposure to



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Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MarApr2024>

We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. How can you improve teen self-esteem?
2. True or False. Even when a youth has the foundation of a supportive family, the reality is that being a teenager can be challenging.
3. List 4 Ways To Make Consequences Effective
4. True or False. Avoid arguing at all costs. It is a conversation; it's a power struggle where there is going to be a winner and a loser. It's a battle to the finish.
5. Fill in the Blanks. Open communication, in which parents listen without _____, is a form of validation for the child.
6. True or False. Having a parent that a child feels they can be honest with is important both to your child's well-being and to your relationship, in the short and long-term.
7. True or False. When your teen's emotions are high, the worst thing you can do is add fuel to the fire by saying things like, "You're overreacting," "This really isn't that big of a deal," or "Will you just chill out?"
8. Fill in the blanks. Their ramped-up emotions really are a byproduct of their growing bodies, brains, and their hormones.
9. Six Ways to Reduce the Drama with Your Teen
10. True or False. Moms do not need to take responsibility for their part in the drama dance.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

(Continued from page 1)

drugs and alcohol, and the feedback they receive from parents, teachers, and peers.

Signs of low self-esteem in teens include:

A negative self-image can manifest itself in several ways, and some can be intertwined with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or other mood disorder. Some signs of low self-esteem can include:

- Isolating behaviors, particularly on activities they once enjoyed.
- Negativity when talking about oneself or others.
- Irrational feelings of guilt or shame.
- Constantly apologizing for every behavior.
- Prefers or is obsessed with fantasy worlds, including video games, movies, etc. to avoid social interaction. Also may be drawn to watching videos or scrolling social media compulsively.
- Avoids competition or trying new things for fear of embarrassment.
- Negative body image, including slouching, looking down, walking behind others, etc.
- Excessive bragging to compensate for low self-esteem. This can also impact their ability to make friends.
- Disordered eating habits.

Of course, should you be concerned about your teen's physical or mental health, you should immediately contact your family health practitioner or a mental health counselor.

The good news is you can help them through this period of growth!

How you can improve teen self-esteem

Whether you're raising your own biological teen children, caring for a teen in foster care, or are just around teens on a regular basis, boosting their self-esteem can be as easy as listening and guiding them to make choices that help them build confidence and resilience. Here are five ways you can encourage a healthy self-esteem in your teen:

1. **Be a role model.** Teens pay more attention to your actions than they do to your words, so lead by example. Teens don't always want to listen to their parents, so help them find a mentor who they respect. Whether it's you or another adult, make sure you are modeling what positive self-esteem looks like. Try not to engage in negative self-talk or putting yourself down for making mistakes. Talk to your teen about what you do when you are anxious, stressed, or feeling down to take care of your mental well-being. Remind them the goal for life is not perfection, but instead contentment with who you are as an individual.

2. **Take an interest in them.** Everyone has their own strengths. Helping your teen focus on things they enjoy and develop their talents will go a long way to toward building your child's self-esteem. Find out what interests them and support them in pursuing it. Remember, it's about finding things they enjoy and boost their confidence, not about their achievements within the activity. A great way to do this is by finding time for one-on-one interactions with your teen to do something they enjoy. Whether it's seeing a movie or sporting event, going to their favorite restaurant, or even playing video games together, your teen will appreciate you showing you are invested in whatever it is they want to do (even if they roll their eyes about it). And when you do have that quality time, remember to put your own distractions and phone away. Be present in the moment.

3. **Coach them.** All children and teens need to do things for themselves to learn. As much as you want to protect them, it's better to provide support rather than trying to control every situation. Teach them self-respect by creating conditions that will help them make smart decisions about their health, relationships, and academic success (2InGage, September 2019). Encourage them to find solutions in a positive way, and offer helpful tips for problem-solving.

4. **Praise them.** Letting your teen know you love and accept them just the way they are creates a sense of security. When they know they are valued for themselves instead of their ability to meet certain conditions, they can identify and appreciate the traits that make them unique. Help your teen work towards realistic goals and reward them for trying.

5. **Monitor social media usage.** Social media platforms can be toxic to teens who constantly compare themselves to their peers. Regulating the amount of time spent on social media may be difficult, but can greatly reduce the chance your teen may be bullied or experience depression.

Wherever your teen is on the self-esteem spectrum, you can help and support them by showing them empathy, kindness, and love. If your teen continues to struggle with their self-esteem, consider reaching out to a therapist or mental health professional who can help them learn the skills they need to build a healthy sense of confidence and self-worth.

By Aubrey Sullivan, LPCC, ATR. Aubrey is a Clinical Onboarding and Development Specialist with Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth (SAFY), a national child welfare nonprofit focusing on

therapeutic foster care, family preservation, foster-to-adopt, and programming for youth aging out of the foster care system.

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<https://parentingteensandtweens.com/grow-teen-self-esteem/>

10 TIPS TO HELP YOUR TEEN BOY EXPRESS HIS EMOTIONS

Teen Boys are Notorious for Keeping Their Feelings Bottled Up

My son walked in the door after school, tossed his backpack on the floor, swung open the pantry door and started grumbling under his breath.

I didn't get my typical "Hey mom, I'm home," or "Did you buy any good snacks? I'm starving!" or "Guess what happened in school today?"

Clearly, something went down at school, and it was eating away at him.

"I can see something is wrong – do you feel like talking about it?" I said.

"No... I don't want to talk about it (as he avoided making eye contact with me). I just want to go to my room," he said.

After a few (gentle) attempts to pry it out of him, it became painfully clear to me that my son was struggling yet he was determined to handle it on his own. Just a few years ago, he would have poured out his feelings and emotions and shared every nitty-gritty detail with me without hesitation.

But he was a teenager now...

Despite the fact that my husband and I have always tried to model healthy emotional expression, my son was convinced it was no longer cool or acceptable to lay your emotions on the table or, worse, show vulnerability or sensitivity. In his eyes, it was a sign of weakness.

What's challenging, is that society is quietly teaching our boys to put their emotions in a box. They're told to "man up," "suck it up," and "be strong." God forbid they shed a tear, get overly sappy or reveal what they're really feeling in their heart – it might be reason enough to relinquish their "man card."

One study showed that as boys move toward adolescence, they're more likely to embrace hyper-masculine stereotypes and become less emotionally available. Another study showed that boys are even more expressive than girls as infants, but that changes as boys grow up – likely because boys are taught to be less expressive.

But that doesn't mean those feelings go away. And refusing to accept and acknowledge them isn't doing our boys any good.

The fact is, our boys' emotional disconnection, both with themselves and others, isn't good for their mental health. It's making them feel confused, unhappy, isolated and ill-equipped

to foster connection with others in a deep, meaningful way.

To prepare them for adulthood, we need to dust off our son's box of emotions that's tucked neatly away on a shelf, toss out old, masculine definitions and empower them with the support they need to fully express themselves so they can enjoy rich relationships moving forward.

The bottom line is, we need to raise our boys differently...

10 Tips to Help Your Teen Boy Express His Emotions

#1 Allow Him to Freely Express a Wide Range of Emotions – Even Tears

Create a safe and protected environment for him to share and express his feelings and emotions – even if that means he breaks down and sheds a few tears. The more freedom your boy is given to feel and speak from the heart, the more emotionally connected he'll feel to you and the more confident he'll be carrying over his emotional side to other relationships in his life.

According to Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, co-authors of *Raising Cane: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, many boys have difficulty expressing their emotions. As a coping mechanism, they'll downplay their true feelings using "shields of various forms to keep others away, including irritability, sarcasm, nonchalance, stoicism, and others."

#2 Help Him Redefine Masculinity

Teach him that he can be strong and sensitive, tough and tender, fearless and frightened. Having a broad range of feelings and emotions isn't a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength and confidence, courage, and self-awareness. It's called being human. Our boys will one day be men. If we can help them learn to embrace and express their range of emotions in a healthy manner, they'll be more likely to one day teach their own sons to do the same.

#3 Nurture Your Boy with Love

Interestingly, one study showed that boys who had a close relationship with their mothers throughout middle school were more likely to resist typical "tough guy" stereotypes which predicted better mental health in the long run. It might seem hard to believe, based on your teen's "offish" behavior, but deep down inside, teen boys crave emotional connection with their parents. They simply don't admit it and they don't know how to go about it.

#4 Keep Your Touch Alive and Well

Wrap your arms around your boy and give him a warm hug (if he's accepting). Even a quick high-five or knuckle bump can be just the type of physical and emotional expression he needs to feel safe and connected to you.

My son plops himself down on the couch next to me nearly

every night looking for a backrub. (Honestly, I'm not sure he really wants a backrub or to feel his mom's loving, reassuring touch at the end of a long day.)

#5 Listen Without Judgement

Dig deep into your son's heart. Ask him what he's feeling, what worries him and what his hopes and dreams are. Ask open-ended questions about his friends, school, sports, activities. Let him openly share his world with you with the comfort of knowing that his feelings will be validated and that he won't be criticized, corrected or judged. Even if you disagree with him, honor his feelings, opinions and perspective.



#6 Encourage Steady & Strong Guy (and Girl) Friendships

When our boys hit the teen years, quite often their friends take center stage. Having a close group of friends your son can connect with, hang out with or talk to about his problems, life at home or struggles at school can prove invaluable.

The secrets they keep and the camaraderie and connection they share with one another opens the door for authentic relationships and a chance for your son to be vulnerable and open with guy (or girl) friends he trusts.

#7 Respect His Privacy

It can take a lot for a teen boy to open up about what he's feeling. When he does, show him the respect he deserves by keeping it to yourself. Never break your teen's trust by sharing private information with others (unless you do so discreetly). You'll betray his trust and he'll think twice about sharing anything with you in the future.

#8 Be Ready to Drop Everything When He Comes to You

When your son wants to talk, (try to) drop everything and listen. My son isn't the chatterbox he once was. In fact, I'm lucky if I get a few words out of him before school or when he gets home from practice (sometimes, they sound more like

grunts). But I'm still able to carve out moments to connect – when we're alone in the car, when I go into his bedroom late at night to say goodnight, and sometimes, when he willingly grabs a quick lunch with me on the weekends. Every once in a while, he'll even surprise me and show up at my bedroom door at 11 p.m. (when I'm exhausted) eager to chat, which, of course, I always seize the moment.

#9 Be a Role Model

Of course, the power and influence moms have on their sons is undeniable. But when it comes to teaching our sons how to express themselves, a male role model is crucial. A father who shows his sappy side and isn't afraid to say what he's really feeling or an uncle who puts his arm around his nephew and says, "You can always talk to me, I'm here for you," can do wonders for a teen boy who desperately wants to express himself, but isn't sure others will be accepting or how to go about it.

#10 Be Patient

Getting in touch with his feelings and working toward emotional transparency takes time. But the safer your son feels expressing himself, the more in tune he'll become with his own emotions and the better equipped he'll become cultivating strong, emotionally healthy relationships with others.

Research has found that boys can connect emotionally with others – including close friends – on a very deep level. We just have to reinforce the idea that it's okay, teach them how and make it safe for them to do so.

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https://raisingteens.today.com/10-tips-to-help-your-teen-boy-express-his-emotions/?fbclid=IwAR2Zqc1F_2VkBSRBffGq9T1C-MbYfB3kpB95kwtWfVvaGEfMMqL3G73di0

EASY TIPS TO HELP REDUCE THE DRAMA WITH YOUR TEEN DAUGHTER STARTING TODAY

Written by: *parentingteensandtweens*

Yes, **teen girls can be drama queens**, but moms can be drama mamas

How?

Our disrespectful, moody, entitled, and defiant daughters can push our buttons.

And what happens when our teens push our buttons?

We get angry and frustrated very quickly. We fire words right back at our daughters that end up escalating the drama,

and we get hooked. It's hard to walk away. And now it's turned into a drama dance.

Now I am not blaming moms or letting teenage girls off the hook.

But moms need to take responsibility for their part in the drama dance.

I am a mom of a teen, and I know how easy it is to get hooked in the drama.

But here is the good news to help you reduce the drama with your teen daughter: When you take responsibility for your part, you can avoid a majority of the drama with your daughter.

The drama will dissipate quickly when you refuse to join the drama dance.

It takes two to do the drama dance. This is why it's important to know how you escalate the drama.

No mom intentionally escalates the drama dance. It's a reaction. You react because you are afraid, or frustrated, or she makes you feel like a failure.

Six Ways to Reduce the Drama with Your Teen Daughter

1. Don't Lose Control

Your daughter loses control. She starts yelling and **being disrespectful**, and before you know it, you feel the fire welling up in your belly. You are in touch with your inner warrior. You've had it, and you are ready to put her in her place, but you lose control.

You lose control of your words, judgment, and actions.

Result: When you lose control, it gives your daughter permission to lose control. This creates a downward cycle that creates a whole new set of problems.

What you can do about it: Take a break. Go to the store. Walk around the block. Take a shower. You need time to calm down.

2. Don't Escalate the Arguing

Avoid arguing at all costs. It is not a conversation; it's a power struggle where there is going to be a winner and a loser. It's a battle to the finish.

Your daughter will try to get what she wants by arguing with you.

She will use her teenage logic, which is really code for "I will argue with you till you let me do what I want."

She will throw things at you like, "You hate my friends." If you take the bait and start defending and arguing why you don't hate her friends, she will continue to argue with more passion and emotion. These arguments go downhill quickly. She will throw everything at you to get her way.

Result: Arguments are doomed from the beginning. Your daughter really is not open to what you have to say. She just wants her way. Because these arguments are so frustrating and irrational you are bound to lose it in bigger ways.

What you can do about it: Wait for a time when both you and your daughter are calm. This is your best chance to have a conversation. When one person is upset it will turn into an argument.

Get clear about what you think and what you are going to do about it. A lot of arguing happens when you are not clear.

3. Don't Scare Her

Another tactic is trying to scare your daughter into changing. This happens when you feel you can't get through to her.

You try to scare her by making negative predictions about the future.

If you are sick and tired of your daughter's room being trashed, you say, "*If you don't learn how to take care of your things, you are going to be the biggest slob in the world. No one will want to room with you in college. Good luck finding a guy who will put up with that.*"

These negative predictions fly from your mouth when you are really frustrated and you don't know what else to do.

Other negative predictions are:

- *If you keep eating like that, you're going to be huge.*
- *If you don't care about your grades you will never get into a college. You'll be lucky to get a job at a fast-food restaurant.*

Result: Your teen daughter feels humiliated or shame. She'll feel that you've given up on her.

One teenage girl told me, "*My mom thinks I'm stupid and can't get into college.*"

Negative predictions lead to apathy, despair, anger, and shame. They never motivate.

What you can do about it: Remember your daughter's strengths, abilities, and resiliencies. This will help calm your fears. Encourage her by saying things like, "*I know you can be successful when you put the time and effort into it.*" You are challenging her but in a positive way.

4. Don't Threaten Her

Threats are different than consequences. A good consequence is well thought out. It is doable and instructs. Threats are like waving a sledgehammer over your daughter's head.

- *If you keep acting like this you're going to boarding school.*
- *You're going to live with your dad.*
- *You're never going to drive again.*
- *I'm not paying for college.*

These threats use fear to "motivate." The problem is that fear never motivates. It throws you and your daughter in a limbic reaction of fight, flight, or freeze. Your daughter will cuss you out or shut down but she will not grow from it.

Most of the time, these "empty threats" are impossible to carry out.

Threats are knee-jerk reactions to a situation and are not well thought out.

The intent of threats is to hurt and punish. They are mean-spirited. Because of this, they hurt **your relationship with**



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- **April 27, 2024**
**Programs to Help Your Struggling Child
Succeed in School**

Cami Bergman, Special Education Information Specialist at PTI Nebraska

This training covers what options caretakers have when their child is struggling in school. Caretakers will learn about both regular and special education options including the Student Assistance Team (SAT) process, 504 Accommodation Plans, and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Children can have struggles in different areas of need such as academic/learning, behaviors, socio-emotional, communication, and more. Whatever your child's educational needs are, caretakers can work with their schools to address their child's challenges and help their child succeed in school. This training will help caretakers learn how to advocate effectively and fully participate in their child's meetings.

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Workshop descriptions: <https://nfapa.org/>

**Facilitated by the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
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your daughter. Your daughter will react by avoiding you or saying she hates you.

Results: When you use threats, you lose credibility since there is no follow-through.

Threats are harmful to your relationship with your daughter. They will not motivate, instruct or change your daughter's behavior in a positive way.

What you can do about it: You don't have to give a consequence in the heated moment. Take time to calm down and get clear. A good consequence takes time to formulate. Give a consequence that you can back up and is related to the offense.

5. Don't Label Her

Labels are extremely shaming because they attack her core essence.

A label says this is who you are and who you will be. A label tells your daughter she is permanently flawed. Some common labels used are selfish, slob, lazy, stupid, mean, rude, or obnoxious.

No mom wants their daughters to be "selfish." When you are desperate, you tell her she's selfish in hopes that she will be shocked and change her behavior and be more giving. The opposite is true. She will become the label. She will start seeing herself as "selfish."

Result: Label the box your daughter is in because she feels ashamed. Shame corrodes the part of your daughter that thinks she can do better.

What you can do about it: Point out your daughter's strengths. Even if she is negative most of the time, remember the exceptions when she is positive. If you think your daughter is selfish, remember times when she has been thoughtful and giving. Catch her when she is the exception and encourage her.

6. Don't Show Contempt

Contempt is an attitude. It's easy to recognize when your daughter does it. You see her rolling her eyes at you or throwing out sarcastic comments.

Contempt is a hostile disrespect for another. It is the opposite of respect. Its goal is to bring someone down to size. It belittles, mocks, and uses sarcastic humor.

Never react to your daughter's disrespect with contempt. It is the most harmful of tactics and you won't be able to reduce the drama with your teen daughter.

Sometimes moms will justify their mocking behavior to show their daughters how contempt feels. Your daughter will not get the point. She will feel your hate or rejection and will not learn anything.

Be careful when using sarcasm. Never use it to belittle your daughter.

Comments like, "Sure, you can get into any college you want, with grades like that," when your daughter's grades are poor will humiliate, mock and shame her.

Now you can use humor with your daughter. Just make sure it's absurd and not belittling of your daughter.

One time my daughter had tampon wrappers and plastic applicators on the floor of the bathroom, and a couple of wet towels. I made a sign that said, "Please put your tampon wrappers in the trash. Signed, the police."

This is absurd, but it worked. My daughter laughed and cleaned the bathroom.

Result: Using contempt will greatly damage your relationship with your daughter and erode her confidence. Your daughter will feel betrayed and see you as her enemy.

What you can do about it: When contempt shows up, it is a warning sign that you are so frustrated with your daughter that you don't like her. Spend time with your daughter that is relaxed and creates a nice experience for both of you.

Take time right now and identify your part in the drama dance. Decide today what you can do about it.

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https://parentingteensandtweens.com/reduce-the-drama-with-teen-daughter/?fbclid=IwAR3i9JOQe4M7qe_TZCosm-JxKRi2J1iBMZuLqWUAmqETk8GHYa6XDcf1mb8

PUNISHMENT VS. CONSEQUENCES: WHY ONE WORKS BETTER FOR TEENS

Written by: Kimberly Yavorski

As our kids enter the teenage years, many things become easier. We no longer have to hold their hands to keep them safe. We don't need to bathe them and brush their teeth. They understand that there are rules and that it's important to follow them. But they also now realize that they are separate from us and that we don't really have any power over them. At some point, it's only natural that they will test what they often see as arbitrary boundaries. So what's a parent to do?

Experts Agree—Consequences Win!

Despite the fact that dictionary definitions of discipline include the use of punishment, most parenting experts say that unwanted behavior is more consistently and positively changed through consequences, especially natural ones.

On their website, the Center for Parent & Teen Communication notes that discipline and disciple share the same root and that the goal of discipline is to teach children to "grow up into respectful people who, in turn, earn respect from others" and ultimately into successful adults. Punishment, on the other hand, makes people angry at being controlled, and angry people are unlikely to reflect and grow.

Psych Central explains: "A consequence is meant to teach,

maintain accountability, and maintain safety,” but “the goal of a punishment is to shame, guilt, impose authority, or harm. The motivation behind a punishment comes from a place of emotion and a need to maintain control.” This teaches teens to make decisions based on fear, instead of what will help them grow. As Alan Kazdin, PHD, ABPP points out in a Psychology Benefits Society blog post, “Punishment, even at its best, does not develop the positive behavior the parents wish.” As many parents can attest, it may temporarily get the desired results, but punishment will not cause anyone “to do homework, to practice, or to clean up.”

Instead, teens see punishment as a parent’s attempt to “ruin their life.” In this emotional state, they may feel betrayed and lose trust, causing resentment that damages the relationship. They also won’t learn what they could have done differently. But natural consequences empower them and foster an understanding that they can do better—by making better choices.

4 Ways To Make Consequences Effective

1. Allow consequences to give teens control.

The idea here is to empower our teens. While it sounds counter-intuitive, we need to give them some level of self-control. Like other life skills, good decision-making requires practice. Offer guidance by giving your teen micro-doses of power to help them learn how to make good decisions while they still have the “safety net” of having you nearby.

For example, if they are “not feeling well,” allow them to decide whether they go to school or stay home. They might need a reminder that if they stay home, they will be “in for the day” as their “job” is to get better and that they will have to make up any work missed. They might realize they are well enough to attend school when they consider the negative consequences of missing it.

2. Make consequences appropriate and reasonable.

Choices have consequences, which can be natural or logical. Experts agree that though natural consequences are more effective, not all situations have built-in repercussions. Sometimes parents have to create these consequences. But it’s important to do so in ways that (1) make sense with relation to the offense and (2) are reasonable.

And, as child psychiatrist and president of the Child Mind Institute Harold Koplewicz says in *The Scaffold Effect, Raising Resilient, Self-Reliant, and Secure Kids in an Age of Anxiety*, “A reinforcer only works if the child cares about it.” He also reminds parents to show them the positives of compliance – they will have no incentive to change behavior if the result is futile. Offering praise, positive reinforcement, or maybe even rewards when they meet and follow expectations can go a long way with teens and older kids, just as they do with preschoolers.

3. Whenever possible, set logical consequences in advance.

Discussing rules and what the consequences are for breaking

them in advance makes the process “fair” and also takes the emotion out of the situation. Many teenage misbehavior comes from a place of impulsivity. Calmly reminding them of the rules and consequences you have laid out in advance will avoid emotional escalations where no one wins.

Remind them that responsibility comes along with privilege and this is part of being an adult. When possible, include them in choosing the types of consequences and seek their feedback. (They might come up with harsher consequences than you do.) Consequences also create a buffer that can avoid damage to relationships. It is not Mom or Dad causing their discomfort, but their own actions.

4. Sit back and let them experience the consequences.

Being late to a team practice will likely mean they will sit the bench. Ignoring the rules about car use will result in car privileges being revoked. Refusing to wear or bring a jacket in cold weather will cause physical discomfort. If their favorite shoes are left in the living room and the puppy chews them, they will have to pay the replacement cost. Clothes that are not put in the hamper do not get washed. If they blow through their personal funds, they are out of money. Speaking in a disrespectful tone will cause an immediate end to the conversation – their side will not be heard. Lying will result in not being trusted.

Koplewicz reminds parents that “consequences don’t have to hurt to work.” He sees effective consequences as vital life lessons and cautions parents to keep emotions at bay to avoid escalations. He cautions that discipline doesn’t work when you’re angry and says it’s okay to postpone imposing it if you’re upset or feel yourself on the verge of yelling: give yourself a “time out” when necessary. This stepping away also serves to role-model self-awareness. Though we may not realize it, our teens learn more from watching us than from listening to us.

Learning to make decisions is an important life skill. Koplewicz says, “Parents who give their kids the freedom to make and regret bad choices are actually helping them learn to make smarter ones.”

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<https://parentingteensandtweens.com/punishment-vs-consequences-why-one-works-better-for-teens/?fbclid=IwAR0QB1HUSrmxOiv1YHLgkfkPhv1N0CC5BtfmqomAzhGQzDQWBL8yyVqM-TI>



SASS, SIGHS AND SLAMMING DOORS: PROVEN WAYS TO DEFUSE YOUR TEEN'S MOODY OUTBURSTS

Here's how to bring harmony back to your home

Teenagers don't come with a manual... if they did, I'm pretty sure no one would have kids.

Okay, maybe that's a slight exaggeration. But can we all agree that raising teens can put your parenting to the test? It's that time on our parenting journey when we mutter "WTH" to ourselves more times than we care to admit. (At least I do, anyway.)

Setting all sarcasm aside, parenting teens is actually wonderful and rewarding ... provided you know how to sidestep a few landmines.

As a mom of three, the most challenging part of raising teens for me has always been dealing with my kids' unpredictable (oftentimes unreasonable) moody outbursts. I didn't always handle it right... trust me, I failed on more than a few occasions. But I eventually learned that there's a right way and a wrong way to handle them. Here are a few powerful and proven ways to defuse your teen's moody outbursts and bring harmony back to your house.

Sass, Sighs and Slamming Doors: Proven Ways to Defuse Your Teen's Moody Outbursts

1. Don't Fuel It

If you don't want to witness the mass destruction of a hurricane unleashed within the four walls of your home, then I can't emphasize this one enough. When your teen's emotions are high, the worst thing you can do is add fuel to the fire by saying things like, "You're overreacting," "This really isn't that big of a deal," or "Will you just chill out?"

Your teen needs as much understanding, patience, and compassion as you're capable of mustering up at the moment – even if they are going on and on about something that seems totally ridiculous to you. The more you accept them (especially in their toughest moments) the more they'll feel validated and empowered to manage their emotions.

2. Remind Yourself "This Won't Last Forever"

This might be of little consolation when you're in the thick of a heated moment with your teen, but their hormonal, "I will argue with anyone about anything" phase won't last forever. **Their ramped-up emotions really are a byproduct of their growing bodies and brains and their hormones.** In fact, so often, I found with my own kids that they were often just as taken back and confused by their fluctuating emotions as I was.

This is one wave you just have to ride. So grab your sturdy surfboard and remind yourself that some waves will be small while others might knock you flat... but eventually, the sea will calm.

3. Dig a Little Deeper

Sometimes, our kids' moody outbursts seem to have no bearing whatsoever. Other times, there is a legitimate reason. **Don't assume, just because your teen woke up or walked in the door in "one of their moods," that it's hormones. Our kids need us to dig deeper than that and not chalk up every mood to hormones or "teenagering."**

Maybe they found out a girl or guy they're crushing on doesn't like them back. Maybe they bombed a test they studied hard for. Maybe they're dealing with friend drama and it's wearing them out. Always give your teen the benefit of the doubt. There's a ton going on behind the scenes in your teen's life... make sure they know it's okay to pull back the curtain and let you in.

4. Remember, They're Little on the Inside

Even if you have to stand on a chair to get eye-to-eye with your teen, be under no illusion – beneath that grown-up body is a child who still desperately needs you. They're still vulnerable and confused and scared. They're still learning how to manage conflict, express themselves, and handle their emotions. (Which is why it's so important not to jump too quickly into discipline mode.)

When your teen puts their fists up (figuratively speaking, that is) or loses control for any reason, stay as calm as possible and don't jump into the ring with them. Instead, stay out of the ring, coach them, and praise them when they step out. **Most importantly, keep your ego in check, and don't take it personally.**

When the dust settles, talk to your teen, help them to identify their feelings, make sure they know it's all so normal, and help them recognize their triggers so they can fend them off next time.

5. Don't Try to Fix It, Just Listen

Whether it's a moody outburst or a legitimate reason, when our kids come unhinged, more often than not, they're not interested in hearing our advice, ideas, or solutions.

All they really want is a sounding board and a little empathy. So stop being the fixer. Let them vent, let them get it off their chest, let them dump their worries and concerns and problems on your shoulders. Just be there to listen AND validate their emotions.

When your daughter walks in the door complaining about how much homework she has, for instance... listen and validate: "Wow... that really IS a lot. I can see why you're upset. Is there anything I can do to help?"

6. Feed Them

I'm pretty sure if someone did a scientific study on parent-teen relationships they'd find 90% of arguments occur because

their teen is either hungry, tired, or totally overwhelmed (or the parent is). **So, the next time your teen gets snarky or sassy before you react, make sure you H.A.L.T.**

H – HUNGRY: Are they starving? Before you respond or react, cut them some slack and FEED THEM.

A- Anxious: Are they worried, stressed, or anxious? Talk to your teen, ask questions, and be supportive. They need you.

L- Lonely: Are they feeling left out, isolated? Maybe what they need is your patience and understanding.

T- Tired: Are they exhausted? Did they pull an all-nighter last night studying? Cut your teen a little slack and tell them you'll be happy to talk calmly about it when they're rested.

7. If You Don't Know How to Support Them, Ask

When you're at a loss on how to calm or help your teen, ask them.

"Listen, I can see how upset you are and I want to help but I don't know how. What can I do to help you feel better?" OR, "I know you're having a hard time right now. Talk to me... how can I help?"

Not only will this immediately defuse the situation, it will also encourage your teen to bring their feelings and emotions to a conscious level so they can be verbalized. Suddenly, you're no longer on the opposing team. You're right alongside them, working the problem together. (A hug can go a long way in defusing a situation, too – IF they'll let you.)

8. Call Them Out... Gently

Sometimes, when our kids get lost in a sea of emotion, a gentle reminder might be all they need to reel themselves back in.

"I get that you're upset and I'm here for you. If you talk to me calmly, I know we can figure this out together." OR, "You've been going on about this for the last 20 minutes and I hope you can see that it's not getting us anywhere. Let's work this problem together... calmly."

Using words like "WE," "US," and "TOGETHER," will let your teen know they're not in this alone and you're on their side.

9. If It Gets Too Heated – Walk Away

So here's a parenting truth bomb we don't often talk about... you DON'T have to put up with your teen's crap. (There I said it!) Sure, you should be calm and caring, empathetic and gentle, and supportive and respectful along with every other "good parenting" adjective in the book. **But if you've exhausted every effort to be the loving parent your child needs and they're still sassy or unreasonable, it's okay to walk away and give the situation a rest.**

Go for a drive, lock yourself in your bedroom, or take a walk around the block – it's far better to remove yourself from the storm than to get smack dab in the middle of it and have both you and your teen sustain damage. Revisit it later when your teen is calmer and you're in a better mindset.

10. Love 'Em Through it ALL

The BEST advice I can offer is this: **Just love the absolute heck out of your teen through it all.** The outbursts, the sassiness, the snarkiness, and the slamming doors. That doesn't mean you can't or won't discipline them or put consequences in place. What it means is that they need to know you're their rock, the steady in their storm, and the one person in this entire world who will stand beside them and have their back no matter what.

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<https://raisingteens.today.com/proven-ways-to-defuse-your-teens-moody-outbursts/?fbclid=IwAR1wy9dhmWMC3n2u-TFLU6XP1nOBM0ygNg-IVzEsAa37cmzVoVD8JWBuUNU>

HOW TO SUPPORT LGBTQ CHILDREN

Written by: Caroline Miller

"I was worried about my parents not accepting me for who I am," recalls Katie Green, who identifies as queer and came out to her family in her early twenties. "I was worried they would stop loving me."

Green's worries are echoed by many LGBTQ teens and young adults facing the prospect of coming out to parents whose reaction they are less than sure about. Even when parents are likely to be understanding, coming out can be a source of intense stress and anxiety.

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

Foster parenting is hard. You face challenges as you parent children and youth with a trauma history that your friends and family do not understand. Please join us in one of our support groups where you can find mutual support and opportunities to discuss parenting joys, challenges and strategies as you navigate the life of a foster parent.

Live Virtual Support Group *NEW DAY

- Second Monday at 6:30pm (MT)
- RSVP required: Contact Jolie, (308) 672-3658 or Tammy, (402) 989-2197

Faces: Online Foster Parent Support Group Chat on Facebook

- Meets Tuesday nights at 9:00 (CT).
- Contact Robbi at 402-853-1091. You must have a Facebook account.

Parenting Across Color Lines

- Fourth Monday of the month – for multi-racial families.
- 6:15pm at Connection Point, Lincoln. Pot Luck Supper prior to meeting.
- RSVP required – Contact Felicia, (402) 476-2273 or Jessica at <mailto:jessica@nfapa.org>

Meetup Adoptive Mom Support Group in Lincoln

- Second Friday of the month, for adoptive moms.
- 7:00-9:00 pm
- RSVP required, Felicia, (402) 476-2273

If you're the parent of a child who you think might be LGBTQ, but who hasn't come out to you, you in turn might worry about what your role should be. What effect will your response have on your child's mental health and well-being? What does your child need to hear?

"The most important thing is just being supportive," says Paul Mitrani, MD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Child Mind Institute. "When people feel loved and supported, they are more capable. They have greater resilience."

"The best possible scenario in my opinion," says Green, "is nothing changes — you're still the same person, people just know more about you now, being LGBTQ is just one aspect of your life. Being reaffirmed in knowing you are loved for who you are is powerful."



How to be supportive

Parents may have mixed feelings about finding that they have an LGBTQ child. This could be because they're worried about how the child will fare in their community — will they be bullied in school or discriminated against in the workplace? — or because they have religious reservations. But whatever your feelings are, Dr. Mitrani urges, you still want to have the same approach: "You want to err on the side of being empathetic and being supportive."

If a parent is very distressed about a child being LGBTQ, Dr. Mitrani urges them not to express those feelings to the child. Talking about it with a support group like PFLAG, someone in your church or congregation, or a therapist could be helpful for you and your child, too. You may have strong feelings, he adds, "but as a parent you always have to come back to see what's best for your child."

Having a parent that a child feels they can be honest with is important both to your child's well-being and to your relationship, in the short- and long-term.

With children, especially adolescents, it's crucial to keep communication open, Dr. Mitrani notes. "You want the message to be, 'I'm glad you told me,' and 'Help me understand what's going on,' as opposed to immediately shutting the communication down."

Open communication, in which parents listen without judgment, is a form of validation for the child, adds Lauren

Latella, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. "If parents either minimize the importance of the child coming out, or jump right into problem solving," she says, "it can leave the child feeling undermined."

Above all, make sure your child knows that you love them and are there for them no matter what. Dr. Mitrani suggests language like: "I'm really glad that we can discuss this because we want to make sure that you're safe and that you're supported. And whatever decisions you need to make we want to be the best ones for you."

Keeping kids safe

As a parent you may be worried about how your child will be treated, at school and in settings where LGBTQ people are not welcome, and how they will handle hostility, if they encounter it. Dr. Mitrani suggests opening the conversation by exploring whether the child is concerned about not being accepted or being targeted for bullying, as opposed to saying, "This is going to be harder for you."

The child might say, "No, everybody already knows and they're supportive and the teachers are great." Or they might alert you to a lack of support.

"If they're in school, you need to understand what your school's policies are," says Dr. Mitrani. "If you get the sense that they won't be supportive of your child, you either need to make a stand and advocate for those supports or consider changing their school to someplace where they will be safe and protected."

When parents are worried about whether an LGBTQ child will be safe, Green notes the importance of support from parents in making children able to speak up. "Providing a supportive home life is critical. Your child feeling comfortable enough to share their safety concerns can make a difference."

Green, who is the Digital Giving Manager at the Trevor Project, which provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ youth, adds that by talking

Foster Parents: Driver's License for Foster Youth

Please answer a brief survey regarding obstacles foster youth have in attaining a driver's license. It should only take a couple of minutes but a great way to share your views.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NEfosteryouthdriverslicense>

Foster Parents: Let Your Voice Be Heard

No longer a Nebraska Foster Parent? Folks leave for all sorts of reasons. We'd like to hear more about your experience--and why you left-- so we can improve the foster parenting experience for those who follow.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Foster-Parent-Exit-Survey>

openly about these issues, parents can help create a safer world for LGBTQ kids. “Being an ambassador for your child and for LGBTQ rights has an impact in the community. By being an advocate for your child and speaking with pride about your child’s identity, you’re working to make the world a better place for other young people.”

Telling other family members

Coming out can be a huge relief for teens or young adults who are LGBTQ, but the process is often rocky and sometimes painful. Your child may have opened up to friends or co-workers who didn’t respond well, or may be worried about how family members or other important people will react. Once your child seems ready to talk, check in with them about how they’re feeling, and how you can be supportive. Start by asking questions and listening to their answers calmly. Your goal is to let them know that you are hearing what they need to share with you.

Something parents often struggle with is the knowledge that they are, if not the last to know, certainly not the first. Try not to be surprised, or offended, if you find that your child has been more candid with their friends, and even some other adults. The Trevor Project’s LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Study found that most respondents disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity to friends first, then trusted adults, who may not always be their parents. Less than half were out to an adult at school. Green notes several reasons why they might be reluctant to tell parents:

- Unlike friends, parents have control over aspects of young people’s lives, including housing and financial support, which can be withdrawn.
- Parent’s expectations of who they should/could be growing up can create a lot of pressure for children. Coming out can put the child at risk of feeling they have disappointed their parents.
- Peers can have a like-minded approach to sexual orientation and gender identity, making them more likely to be accepting and supportive of the LGBTQ community.

When it comes to telling others in the family that a child is LGBTQ, it’s recommended that you let the child take the lead. “Telling the rest of the family is up to the person who is coming out,” says Green. “They’ll either have a solid understanding of how they want to proceed or they may not know — just have an open conversation with them and be honest, clear and supportive to help them plan how to move forward. Being respectful of their wishes is a very important element to this conversation.”

Another concern parents express is the worry that their child’s announcement of their sexual orientation may be influenced by trends in their peer group.

“Adolescence, when most kids tend to come out, is a time of identity formation,” says Dr. Mitrani. “Kids experiment with different things, whether it’s hairstyles or clothing or music,

and they’re trying to find themselves.” Sexual orientation and gender identity may be one of those things. But while that’s true,” he adds, “my experience is that it’s not in the majority of the cases.”

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GENERATIONAL FOSTER CARE IN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Written by: SHAWNA BULLEN-FAIRBANKS

Foster care is generational in many Native American communities. It started with the residential Indian boarding schools. Since then, we have been overrepresented in the foster care system nationwide, according to the National Center for Juvenile Justice. A lot of people don’t know this, but this is another form of genocide. It’s known as “cultural genocide,” and I’ve experienced it in foster care. Due to my experiences in foster care, I forgot how to dance in powwows, as well as other traditions, teachings and stories.

Now as an adult, I’m trying to relearn everything that I lost and everything I knew as a child. I often feel like I don’t belong or that I’m an imposter due to having to relearn everything in my culture. I was really close to my maternal grandmother growing up, and when I went into foster care, I lost that relationship due to being distanced in a group home. For my so-called “safety,” the group home refrained for two weeks from telling me that my grandmother died and thus prevented me from going to her funeral services. I felt so heavy in my heart because I learned most of my culture as a child from my grandma. I was hoping when I left foster care, I could turn to her for guidance, but I lost her instead.

Foster care has also been intergenerational in my family due to my father experiencing foster care and being adopted from the child welfare system. He also experienced various group homes as a teenager. My father never would have wanted what he experienced to be my experience. A lot of our elders never would’ve wanted this. I never would’ve had to be put in foster care if the system helped my mother. People don’t know but our children are still being taken from us just in a different way now. Poverty is being confused as neglect in the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community. Our cultural norms are being viewed in a white perspective and are being seen as abusive instead. Colonization put us on the reservations, and we live in poverty. Rather than helping us thrive in our communities, our children are being taken away due to poor conditions, the very conditions that white

America put us in. It's a never ending cycle.

Bottom of Form

I love the color of my skin. I love my brown eyes and my culture. I love my community and my fellow Anishinabe people. I attended a powwow for the first time in six years as an adult last year with my partner. I remember feeling so alive hearing the music and seeing my people dance. It felt so honorable and beautiful. The thing I love about my culture and my people is that everybody is welcome to come to our powwows and see us dance and listen to our music. All people — from every race, class, nationality, age, sexuality, gender identity, and with any disability — are welcome.

My message to any Indigenous and Native American youth in foster care is that your brown skin is absolutely beautiful, and your culture is absolutely worth learning even if it's later on. There will be many people ready to teach you with welcoming and accepting open arms. It's never too late to learn about yourself and to embrace everything with open arms. It's never ever too late. We, as humans, are constantly learning things even when we're elders. And if nobody believes in you, I believe in you!

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<https://imprintnews.org/youth-voice/generational-foster-care-in-native-american-communities/247162>

WHEN KIDS WON'T COOPERATE: GIVE CHOICES

Giving choices may be the single most useful tool parents have for managing life with young children. It really is almost a magic wand, at least until children are about five. And even into the teen years, choices help children learn to manage themselves.

“Do you want to go to bed now or in five minutes? Five minutes? Ok, do we have an agreement that in five minutes you'll go to bed no matter what?”

Why does giving choices work so effectively? Because it's a win-win solution. You're offering only choices that are okay with you, so you're happy. She gets to pick one that's okay with her, so she's happy. You sidestep the power struggle, because you aren't making her do something; she is choosing. The child is in charge, within your parameters. No one likes to be forced to do something. Here, because she chooses, she cooperates.

So how do you use this magic wand?

1. Give limited choices.

Make them as palatable as possible to the child, but eliminate any options that are unacceptable to you.

2. For young children or any child who is easily overwhelmed, an either/or choice works best.

“We have to leave now. Do you want to put on your shoes yourself or do you want me to put them on for you?” Loading ad

3. As children get older, choices can get more complicated.

“You can quit soccer if you want, but what sport or physical activity do you think you'd like to try? You need to choose one physical activity.”

4. Choices can be used to help kids learn to manage themselves.

“As soon as your homework is done, I'll help you carve that pumpkin. Your choice, but I know you want to start on the pumpkin as soon as we can.” He has the choice to procrastinate on his homework, but you're helping him motivate himself to tackle it now.

5. Choices can teach children consequences.

“You know your piano recital is coming up. Extra practice will help you feel more confident, but that's your choice.” Don't offer choices you can't live with, of course. If you aren't willing to let her make a fool of herself at the recital, you may need to help her structure her practice effectively.

6. Remember that empathy doubles the effectiveness of giving choices.

Empathy helps the child feel understood, so he's less upset, and less resistant. That means he's more likely to actually be able to make a choice and move on.

You might think of giving choices as Parenting Aikido. Instead of meeting your child's resistance with force -- which creates a power struggle, and, ultimately, a more resistant child -- you affirm his right to some control, but within the bounds you set. The result: A happier, more cooperative child, who knows you're on his side. And who gets good at making healthy choices!

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