



# Dealing with a Difficult Teenager

Do you feel like your teen is speaking a foreign language? Here are some tips to help.

## Trust earns you the right to be heard

Isn't "your right" already guaranteed simply because you're a parent? It should be, but in the real world it isn't. Your teens are focused on the here and now. They're probably not thinking about all the sacrifices you've made for them through the years or even how much you love them. But they will, almost instantaneously, recall the "injustices" you've caused: your "countless" broken promises, the times you blamed them for things they insisted they didn't do, days when you were "too busy." While perfect parenthood should never be your goal, it is important to build trust by earning the right to be heard.

## Your attention builds trust

Teens know that love shown by parents says, "Your life is important, daughter (or son), and I'm going to give you my time." Spend time with them, show them you will listen and talk and work things out together. Invade their world ... and let them invade yours.

## Breathing room = trust

Invading their world should be balanced with plenty of space. Invading their world doesn't mean you continually nose into their business. Teens need room to grow, to make their own decisions. This is crucial for their development into responsible adults.

## Watch what you say and how you say it

The best intentions in the world can backfire if you use the wrong words. Phrases like "You never," "You always," "You don't ever" sound accusing and can cause your teen to become defensive and ultimately to shut down. When you speak, stress your particular wants and feelings by using "I." For

example, saying, "I want" or "I feel" are effective places to begin.

## Take interest in what your teen has to say

A few years back, a TV talk show on parent-teen relations confirmed the need for parents to take a stronger interest in their kids. Teen after teen shared stories of heartache about life at home with parents who were out of touch with their kids. As the show ended, the host asked the audience for their comments. A 14-year-old boy stood with his mother and shared these words with a national TV audience: "This is my mom. She knows me." You can close the gap by taking a genuine interest in your teen and his or her world. Tune into feelings and try to look at events at home or at school from your teen's point of view, as well as your own. If your teen senses that you don't really understand or care, he or she will stop listening to you. But when you're clearly doing your best to understand, the chances are much greater that your teen will tune in to you.

## Learn to listen

One of the biggest complaints I've heard from teenagers is that their parents just don't listen. "My parents don't understand me." "We can't seem to communicate." "Things could be better if they'd just give me a chance - and listen!".

## Control your anger

Many parents fail to acknowledge the extent of their anger. What's more, the parents expect their teenager to exhibit a maturity level that he or she has not yet attained. Listening is the only constructive way to process anger. As you become a better listener, your teen will begin to feel understood. He or she may not agree with you but will respect you because you have treated him or her as a person. Your teen will be more inclined to follow your leadership.

## Be flexible

It's easy to approach your teens with tunnel vision. You know what you want and that's all you see. Unfortunately, tunnel vision will make you completely unaware of the needs of your teen. And that's how many family arguments get started - with people screaming demands at each other, blind to the needs of the others involved.

## Make "shared meaning" your goal

If you're tired of pointless arguments with your teenager that never seem to accomplish anything - except maybe your blood pressure rising and him or her being grounded - try a communication style called shared meaning. The goal of shared meaning is to be heard accurately. And once you've had a chance to state your case and listen to your teen's perspective, the foundation is set for communication - and for a fair solution to what's bugging you.

Adapted from [cbn.com](http://cbn.com)

## RELATED SCRIPTURE

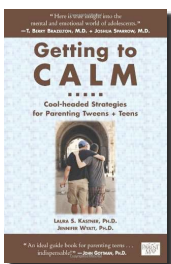
A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother (Proverbs 29:15).

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court (Psalm 127:3-5).

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6).

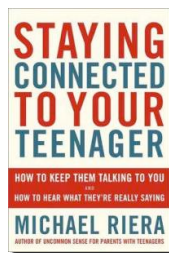
## RELATED RESOURCES



### Getting to CALM: Cool-Headed Strategies for Parenting Tweens & Teens

Laura S Kastner, PhD and Jennifer Wyatt, PhD  
ISBN 978-0982345405  
Parenting a teenager is tougher than ever, but new brain research offers new insight into the best way to connect with

teens. With humor, wisdom and a deep understanding of the teenaged brain, noted teen expert Dr. Laura Kastner shows parents how to stay calm and cool-headed while dealing with hot-button issues everything from rude attitude and lying to sex and substance use — with clear, easy-to-follow suggestions for setting limits while maintaining a close and loving relationship.



### Staying Connected To Your Teenager: How To Keep Them Talking To You And How To Hear What They're Really Saying

Michael Riera, PhD  
ISBN 978-073820845

At last, a book of sage advice that will help frustrated parents reconnect with their teenager and keep that connection even in today's often-crazy world. The first step is simple: realizing that inside every teen resides two very different people-the regressed child and the emergent adult. The emergent adult is seen at school, on the playing field, in his first job, and in front of his friends' families. Unfortunately, his parents usually see only the regressed child-moody and defiant-and, if they're not on the lookout, they'll miss seeing the more agreeable, increasingly adult thinker in their midst. With ingenious strategies for coaxing the more attractive of the two teen personalities into the home, family psychologist Mike Riera gives new hope to beleaguered and harried parents.

## HELP AT LONG HOLLOW

### Small Groups:

- Sundays @ 10:00 am (Hendersonville Campus) — On-going group for parents of elementary and middle schoolers. Room 236.

You can find on-campus and off-campus groups that meet your needs by visiting [longhollow.com/grow](http://longhollow.com/grow) and clicking the button to Launch Group Finder Now.