

Ten Truths for Parents About Raising Teens

First, it's not as easy as it looks. It only looks easy when you're on the outside looking in—*like when you don't have any!* Something amazing happens when a child turns “13” as seven years of brain freeze sets in. It *can* be a creative time of fun and laughter, or it *can* be over-the-top challenging (probably some of both). *And you thought toddlers were tough...* Okay, here goes:

1. Trust but verify. You have the right as a parent to know where they are, who they are with, where they are going, and when they'll be home. You don't stop parenting when your kids hit the teen years; you **i*n*t*e*n*s*i*f*y**. In other words, don't be naïve. It's not your kids that you don't trust; it's Satan! Hopefully you have been around long enough to know that he is never trustworthy. Remember this: he is a lion on the prowl and has your kids in his sights (**1 Pet.5:8**). You don't protect them by passively looking the other way.

2. Set the example. Kids learn their values from us, so make sure your actions reflect those values. Teens can handle anything except hypocrisy. Note two facts: (1) They can spot hypocrisy a mile away, and they (2) will exploit it to their advantage. Make sure your decisions are God-honoring. Leadership starts at the top and that's *you*. ***“You [parent] shall love the Lord with all your [parent] heart and with all your [parent] soul and with all your [parent] might” (Deut.6:5).***

3. Communicate with them. Teens tend to “plug in” in order to tune out. Don't let them do that all the time. Learning how to converse and communicate with adults begins with their knowing how to converse and communicate with you. How? Start by asking questions at the supper table. Fun questions: *If you could live anywhere in the U.S., where? Outside the U.S., where? What are your three all-time favorite movies? Your top-three favorite meals? Besides asking you these questions, name three things that annoy you?* Etc. If the silent treatment continues, offer them a simple solution: either unplug and talk to me, or I'm coming to eat lunch with you at school! (One mother actually did it and the response was amazing).

4. Look for outside resources. Family and friends with a track record for raising responsible kids are a great resource. Ask for book recommendations or church websites where you can download lessons that speak to this issue.

5. Make the boundaries clear. Like the boundaries of your physical property, teens need to know the rules (boundaries). Specify what is in and out of bounds. Nothing discourages and frustrates a child more than boundaries not clearly defined.

*Rejoice, young man during your childhood...
Remove vexation [rebellion] from your heart and put away pain from your body...
Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth...*

Ecclesiastes 11:9a, 10; 12:1

THE FATHER KNOWS BEST

6. Discipline with consistency. Being consistent is our hardest job as a parent—because sometimes we’re just too tired to respond. Looking the other way, however, doesn’t help our kids. Contrary to the thought of the day: your job is NOT to be your child’s best friend. Your job is to be their **parent**. Discipline when necessary and make it stick. If you do, they may not always “like” you now, but the day will come when they will “love” you for loving *them* enough to confront and correct.

7. Talk to your teens about tough stuff. I asked a class of men this question: *How many of you had dads who talked to you about sex?* Two out of forty raised their hands. That’s tragic! Don’t get upset about sex education at *school* if you’re not educating at *home*! Dads, talk to your sons about how to treat girls. Moms, talk to your daughters about how she should expect to be treated. And talk about other life-stuff: how to handle money, stress, controlling anger, and how to make good decisions. Each of these can be life-equipping conversations. Pick your moments and give them truths upon which to build their life.

8. Keep a sense of humor. –An absolute must! Seeing the *delightful* side of life will counter-balance the *difficult*. Laugh with your kids (**Prov.15:13a; 17:22**).

9. Don’t let technology to rule. Teens and technology go together and while there are positive sides, there are some negatives. Have “tech-free zones” in your house. The family meal is one. Turn off everything that plugs in and turn on to each other. Talk. Do things that require interaction. Limit computer and phone use. Know your kids passwords and check their Facebook friends (and the photos of their friends). As long as your young people eat and sleep in your house—it’s *your* house (all of it).

10. Teach them how to treat you. People treat us as we allow them to treat us. As a parent, you deserve respect. This father-mother responsibility of training must begin very early in life.

Raising kids is like flying a kite—let out too much string too soon and it will crash to the ground. Hold it too tight and the kite never flies on its own. Our job is to give them *roots* and *wings*—roots that secure their faith and wings that enable them to soar.

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