

Teens - Normal Rebellion

Definition

- During the teenage years, young people work on becoming more independent
- Teens rebel against long established parent norms, rules, advice and oversight
- Behaviors include defiance, rudeness, fault-finding, testing limits and some risk taking
- Emotions often run high during this period of transition. Mood swings and angry outbursts are common.

Health Information

Causes

- To become an individual, your teen must cast aside their dependent parent-child relationship. They must change the way they relate to you.
- Strict and controlling parenting styles make teens rebel even more.
- Hormones add fuel to the fire.
- This normal journey from childhood to an adult relationship with one's parents is often a difficult time.

Care Advice

1. Try to Treat Your Teen as an Adult Friend:

- By the time your child is 12 years old, start working toward the kind of relationship you would like to have with them when they are an adult.
- Treat your child the way you would like them to treat you when they become an adult.
- Your goals are mutual respect, cooperation, support and the ability to have fun together.
- Strive for relaxed, casual talks during cycling, hiking, shopping, sports, driving, cooking, mealtime, working, and other times together.
- Use praise and trust to help build their self-esteem. Recognize your child's feelings by listening carefully and making comments that convey understanding rather than judgement. Remember that listening doesn't mean you have to solve your teen's problems.

2. Avoid Criticism About Harmless Behaviors and Choices:

- Most parent-teen relationships turn negative when parents criticize their teen too much. Dressing, talking, and acting differently than adults helps your teen feel independent from you. Your teen will often imitate what his friends are doing. It's symbolic but important.
- Try not to find fault with your teen's clothing, hairstyle, makeup, music, friends, recreational interests, room decor, use of free time, use of money, speech, posture, or belief system. And your teen doesn't want to hear your own personal views about these subjects.
- Allowing your teen to rebel in these harmless areas often prevents them testing you in major areas, such as drugs, ditching school, or stealing. Step in and try to make a change only if your teen's behavior is harmful, illegal, or interferes with your rights (see the sections on house rules).
- Another common error is to criticize your teen's mood or attitude. A negative or lazy attitude can only be changed through good example, praise and time. The more you focus on unconventional (even strange) behaviors, the longer they will last.

3. **Clarify the Rules and Consequences within your Home:**
 - You have the right to make rules regarding your home and other possessions. A teen's choices can be tolerated within their own room but they need not be imposed on the rest of the house.
 - You can ban loud music that interferes with other people's activities or cell phone use after 10 PM.
 - While you should make your teen's friends feel welcome in your home, clarify the ground rules about parties or where snacks can be eaten.
 - Your teen can be placed in charge of cleaning their room and washing their clothes.
 - You can insist upon enough showers to control body odor.
 - You must decide whether you will loan them your car, bicycle, gear, TV, clothes, and so forth.
 - Reasonable consequences for breaking house rules include loss of phone, TV and car privileges.
 - If your teen breaks something, they should repair it, pay for its repair or replace it.
 - If your teen makes a mess, they should clean it up.
 - If your teen is doing poorly in school, you can restrict screen time.
 - You can also put a limit on phone privileges and weeknights out.
 - If your teen stays out too late or doesn't call you when they're delayed, you can ground them for a day or a weekend. In general, grounding for more than a few days is looked upon as unfair and is hard to enforce.
 - Caution: Time-out is rarely useful in this age group, and any physical punishment can cause to a serious breakdown in your relationship.
4. **Use Family Meetings for Deciding Revised House Rules:**
 - Some families find it helpful to have a brief meeting after dinner once a week.
 - At this time your teen can ask for changes in the house rules or bring up family issues that are causing problems.
 - You can also bring up issues (such as your teen's demand to drive them to too many places and your need for their help in arranging carpools).
 - The family often functions better if the decision-making is democratic.
 - The goal of the discussion should be that everyone wins.
 - The climate can be one of: "Nobody is at fault, but we have a problem. How can we solve it?"
5. **Let Society's Rules and Consequences Teach Responsibility Outside the Home:**
 - All teens need to learn many life lessons from trial and error. By trying out different ways to solve problems, they will learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Speak up only if your teen is going to do something dangerous or illegal. Otherwise, you must rely on the teen's own self-discipline, pressure from smart friends to behave responsibly, and the lessons learned from the consequences of their actions.
 - City curfew laws will help control late hours.
 - A school's requirement for being on time will help your teen want to get up on time.
 - School grades will hold your teen accountable for homework and other aspects of school.
 - If your teen has bad work habits, they will lose their job.
 - If your teen makes a poor choice of friends, they may find their trust broken.
 - If they don't practice hard for a sport, the coach and team will pressure them to work harder.
 - If they mispend their allowance or earnings, they will run out of money before the end of the month.
 - If by chance your teen asks you for advice about these problem areas, try to describe the pros and cons in a brief, neutral manner. Ask some questions to help them think about the main risks. Then conclude your remarks with a comment such as, "Do what you think is best."
 - Teens need plenty of opportunity to learn from their own mistakes before they leave home and have to solve problems without your support system.

6. Give Your Teen Space When They are in a Bad Mood:

- When your teen is in a bad mood, most often they won't want to talk about it with you.
- If teens feel like discussing a problem with anybody, it is usually with a close friend.
- Give your teen lots of space and privacy when they are in a bad mood.
- Caution: This is also a poor time to talk to your teen about anything, even a pleasant topic.

7. Do Not Allow Painful, Disrespectful Remarks:

- Some talking back is normal. We want our teens to express their anger through talking and to challenge our opinions in a rational way. We need to listen.
- Expect your teen to present their case with passion and persistence.
- Let the small stuff go -- it's only words. But don't accept disrespectful remarks such as calling you a "jerk." Unlike a negative attitude, these mean remarks should not be ignored. You can respond with a comment like, "It really hurts me when you put me down."
- Make your statement without anger if possible. If your teen continues to make angry, unpleasant remarks, leave the room. Don't get into a shouting match with your teen because no one wins.
- What you are trying to teach is that everyone has the right to disagree and even to express anger, but that screaming and rude remarks are not allowed in your house.
- You can prevent some rude behavior by being a role model of constructive disagreement, a calm voice and the willingness to apologize.

8. What to Expect:

- This normal rebellion and search for autonomy continues for at least 2 years.
- After it peaks, it often continues to recur at times for another 4 to 6 years.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your teen is depressed, suicidal, drinking or using drugs, or taking dangerous risks
- School: not doing schoolwork, skipping school
- Friends: has no close friends
- Home: your family life is seriously disrupted by your teen
- You feel your teen's rebellion is out-of-control
- You find yourself escalating your criticism and punishment
- Your teen does not improve within 3 months after using these recommendations
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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