

Privacy:

- Do not interfere with privacy. Teens need privacy. They need time to think and to daydream. They even need to have conversations with friends that parents do not hear.
- Do not take the door off a teen's room. Taking a lock off is fine, but always knock and be granted entry before you enter—just as the teen should do with your room. Respect builds respect.
- If you are worried about teens hiding drugs or alcohol in their room, tell them that you will be searching their room. The warning should keep them from making the mistake of keeping illegal things there.

Bad Influences:

- Teens choose their friends based on how they feel about themselves. Confident, motivated, self-reliant teens will choose friends who are like them.
- Help teens feel good about themselves by focusing on their good qualities and supporting their successes.
- Always ask where they are going and with whom. Get the address and phone number.

Trouble in school:

- If your teen breaks rules in school and the school imposes consequences, it is not necessary to add additional punishments—just express your disappointment.
- Teens must learn to deal with real-world rules and with people in authority they don't like. Help them find strategies to effectively manage situations or to know what to say, but don't do it for them.
- Do not intervene with teachers unless absolutely necessary. Teens will learn to handle personality conflicts and difficult situations better if they have to deal with them on their own. Help them learn how.
- If grades are declining, monitor homework rather than punish. Set a time and place for homework (e.g., one hour at the kitchen table) and keep your child there even if he/she says they have no homework.
- Keep your computer in a "public" space instead of in a child's room. It is less likely to be used for inappropriate things.

A GUIDE TO MORE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO DISCIPLINE TEENS

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The Basics

- Teens make mistakes—lots of them. Don't expect perfection.
- There should be rules.
- Both you and your teen should know what the rules are—even if the rules are broken. State them clearly. For example, "You must be home by 10:30".
- Expect the rule to be followed closely but not perfectly.
- Do not decide on a consequence for a broken rule or bad behavior when you are angry. Cool down and think about what is truly appropriate. Don't overdo it.
- Natural consequences are the best. That is, those that directly relate to the misbehavior and teach rather than punish. For example, if your teen oversleeps and misses the bus, he has to walk to school.
- Choose consequences that you can easily enforce—e.g., taking away a phone or unplugging the computer. If you tell your child that he can no longer speak to his friend Johnny, you can't keep him from doing it at school.
- Notice and comment on good behavior. Positive reinforcement always works better than negative reinforcement.
- Never humiliate a child—neither in private nor in public. Humiliation crushes self-esteem and causes resentment. It does not correct behavior.

Many ideas in this booklet are explained in more detail in Anthony E. Wolf's book, *Get Out Of My Life, But First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl To The Mall?*

Grounded for Life

Grounded means staying home and not seeing friends. Beyond that, you can decide if grounded means with or without a phone, video games, TV, stereo, etc.

Don't be too harsh—if doesn't work.

- Do not ground kids for too long. Usually a weekend is the longest.
- A weekend is a lifetime in the mind of teens missing their friends.
- Long grounding is hard to enforce. You can't ground a kid if you are not there to monitor him/her. When they are grounded, you are grounded. So keep it short.
- If you are lax about following through, your child won't take you seriously and will break the rule again.
- If you are very strict about following through on a long grounding, your child will either lose heart and become depressed, or will break the rules anyway—figuring he/she has nothing to lose.
- When teens are grounded, they have no opportunity to prove to you that they can change. They need the freedom to prove they can be trustworthy.
- Do not take your child out of a sport or other positive extra-curricular activities.
- Be clear about when the grounding will be over—otherwise it is like being sent to jail without a sentence. Not fair.
- Expect teens to complain. Don't listen or react.
- Use the time you are home with your grounded child to do positive things—have conversations (listen, don't lecture), play games, cooperate on chores. A whole weekend doing nothing is ok too.
- Your goal is to raise children who are safe and happy. They can't be happy if they are grounded for life. They can be happy if fair rules are fairly enforced. Model fairness.