

## Parenting in Focus: Teens, rules and consequences

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We all want a peaceful household, but conflict will arise when your teen does not follow the rules. A question you need to ask is: What are the consequences for a teenager for breaking the rules?

It is important not to overreact, but you should have consequences that have some impact. Remember, you are the parent and you set the rules and consequences.

Here are some suggestions for reasonable consequences. Keep in mind that consequences should not be for such a length of time that your teen will forget why he is being punished.

- Have your teen read and discuss information about the harmful effects of drugs, tobacco or alcohol. At least he can learn something from the episode.
- Restrict computer or television use. This is not an equal punishment for all. Some teens really love using these devices and other teens wouldn't even mind if you took them away.
- Say no to outside activities such as going to town or to visit his friends. He is used to this during the pandemic.
- Temporarily restrict friends from coming over to the house. This may already be happening as adults are hesitant to have many people visiting at this time.
- Have your teen perform a community service to encourage positive use of his time. This is well worth spending time to think of different ways your child can help others in the community. You may need to come up with several suggestions. Call the Boys & Girls Club and see what jobs they need done.
- Limit his use of the phone. This may be one of the biggest restrictions of all.
- Give some thought to other things that are important to your teen. These have the biggest impact on him because they would be most missed by him.

### Maintain expectations

Middle school is not the age to begin to back down. Your child needs you to be in charge throughout his entire childhood.

When he does something you said he should not do, you need to follow through. Try to make the punishment fit the "crime" and have some consequence.

If he ignores the curfew on Friday night, let him know he will not be going out the following Friday. If he will not pick up his room before he goes out, make sure he knows he will not be going out. He needs to know you are still parenting even while he may be fighting it.

It's tricky being a parent. Growing up does not necessarily mean growing away. No matter what their age, children never outgrow the need for parents but they need them differently as they mature.

Your relationship with your child can become more satisfying if you make a gradual transition from an emphasis on protecting and controlling during early childhood to teaching and supervising during the tween and teen years, to advising and guiding during the adult years.

Having rules and consequences help your child know what is okay and what is not. Make an investment in your child: talk together.

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