

Setting Limits and Boundaries for Your Teen

In setting boundaries and limits for teens, remember that it is a kid's job to push their limits as far as they can. It is a parent's job to be flexible, yet consistent in letting your kid know how far they can go.

The developmental stage your teen is in requires him to separate from his parents and find his own individual self/identity. Keep this in mind when you are setting limits. He/she has to have some ways of expressing himself, (i.e. clothing, hair, interests). Let him take some risks; have some adventures, and identity that is his own. Use the 1-10 scale, (1 being not important, 10 being important). Ask yourself: In the whole scheme of life, how important is this one thing?

SIDEBAR: If your concern is over what others may think, forget it. What does that really matter?

In setting limits and boundaries for your teen, work on your own limits and boundaries. For instance, if you can't control your temper, it is going to be difficult to help your teen set limits in this area. Other areas may be stress, anxiety, how to communicate or handle conflict. Reading articles or books, or talking things out with friends, family, or a counselor may be helpful.

Your teen will also be egocentric. She may not be able to think outside of herself. You may want her to understand how much you do for her, how much you have sacrificed, but she is not going to get it. Facilitate consideration, don't demand it. When you are not in a conflict, talk to your kids about your family values and heritage. Discuss things outside of the family that you may do together, (i.e., adopting a child from World Vision, helping stock a church food pantry, helping neighbors with yard work, etc).

Be careful to remember your own age when in conflict with your children. Children seem to have power to engage us in acting like we are children too. When setting boundaries, remind yourself that you are the adult and be mindful to act that way.

Teens can make great facial gestures at adults. They are pros at the eye rolls, the huffs when told to take out the garbage. I have to admit, I don't always have the best attitude when I have to chores. Who really wants to do the dishes? So...when you tell your child to take out the garbage, don't look at them and don't listen to them. As long as the chore is done, who cares what face the kid was making???

Children should have curfews and parents need to be able to know where they are and whom they are with. With every year, maybe curfews can be extended 15-30 minutes, (so you don't want to start a 14 year old out with a midnight curfew. Of course, there may be times that the curfew may be extended for a special occasion.