



Shoulder to Shoulder
Raising Teens Together



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AVOID THE “FREAK OUT” ROUTE

Most parents and teens do battle, and these “power struggles” test everyone’s patience. You casually ask your daughter if she is going to wear *that* shirt, and she retorts, “Don’t freak out mom!” What’s a parent to do? While these challenges are a normal part of every day life with teens, there are steps to take to avoid (*or at least reduce*) the “freak out” route.

STAY COOL.

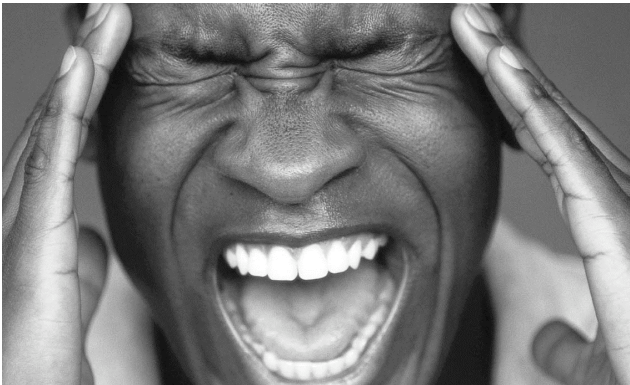
If we overreact or lose our cool, we diminish our control with teens and escalate the conflict. Parents show they are in charge by staying calm and dealing with an issue even-handedly. (*Yes, it’s easier said than done.*)

STICK TO THE GROUND RULES.

Decide on a few non-negotiable rules. These can be as simple as “no television until homework is finished,” or “put dirty clothes in the hamper.” When a teen pushes back, don’t argue over details or negotiate. Simply say, “Sorry, that is against the family rules.” Teens will try and outwit us or start an argument. Don’t over-explain, and don’t renegotiate. Just remind them of the rule.

IGNORE THE “SMALL STUFF.”

Many conflicts are not worth your time and energy. Does it really matter if their bedroom is clean for a sleepover? Would it be the end of the world if they play one more CD? Probably not. The key to successful parenting is to know which battles are worth tackling. Concentrate only on those issues that genuinely need your attention to protect your teen’s well-being.



KNOW WHEN TO LET IT GO.

Conflict carries different meanings and feelings for parents and teens. When teens blow up about something we feel is “insignificant,” teens tend to forget about the issue soon afterwards. For us, the tension can linger and make us more upset. Sometimes, we just have to let it go. Learn to ignore the “attitude,” the flip remark or the threat of disobedience from your teen.

WHY ALL THE FREAKING OUT?

“Because I’m the parent” doesn’t work anymore. Teens know they can reach conclusions on their own, think independently and question and debate (*this may also mean arguing*). Their world has expanded, and they can go to other adults and friends for advice and answers. Like it or not, it’s natural for a teen to question adult authority, and it’s ok if they don’t agree with us all the time.

IT’S NOT “COOL” TO BE WITH PARENTS.

Teens are developing their sense of identity – and it can be an anxious time for them. The bad news? Teens will go to great lengths to distance themselves from us so they can establish their identity and independence. The good news? Questioning the rules and re-examining beliefs we taught them is the norm. And while teens may disagree with adults sometimes for no other reason than to be different from us, they may also have a logical reason for coming to their own conclusion. It’s a challenge, but we must try to better understand how teens weigh decisions.

Adapted from: “Positive Parenting of Teens” University of Minnesota Extension Service & University of Wisconsin – Extension, 1999.