

6 Ways to Discipline Teens Without Losing Your Cool

Why should you have to be the heavy, just another adult who comes down on them and reminds them of their place? Because they need it and because you are the adult, the one with more experience; and you are, after all, responsible for them. Besides, they'll love you for it. Think of the adults in your life that you have admired or looked up to. Did they let you get away with whatever you wanted? They were people who helped you learn about yourself and helped you set and define the limits that allowed you to grow. This is what your teens need from you.

Here are a few tips to keep you from being the tyrant you (and they) fear or the "easy mark" that will keep you from being effective.

Set Clear Limits. Establish what behaviors are and are not acceptable. If you are able to do this with your young people, it gives them ownership and a sense of responsibility for maintaining those limits. Make sure that everyone knows what the limits are, and be consistent in enforcing them.

Set Clear Consequences for Exceeding the Limits. Just as important as the limits you have set are the results for going beyond them. As with the limits, establish the consequences for unacceptable behavior with the teens. Be sure that the consequence is reasonable and relevant.

Disapprove of the Action, Not the Person. It is important that you differentiate between not liking a negative behavior and not liking the young person who did it. Be clear about why the behavior is inappropriate and how it affects you and other people.

Use Mistakes as an Opportunity for Learning. Help them work through the behavior and its consequences and give them the opportunity to explore the alternative options for the next time.

Be Patient and Realistic. Remember they are still kids. It's important to maintain the standards but be sure to do it in a way that allows them the room to breathe and grow. Always remember you are the authority but it is not something you have to prove by coming down hard and heavy. A good-natured touch will have a lasting impact. Keep your sense of humor healthy and don't sweat the small stuff.

Always Show Them You Love Them. Be sure they understand that you set these limits because you care and that maintaining a relationship with them is very Important to you.