

An Honest Conversation to TEENS about TEENS

■ by Gregory Rodriguez, MA, LCPC



As a therapist who works with many teenagers and their families, there's one thing I can say about teenagers; it's that they know how to push their parents' buttons. Instinctively, it seems, they come with an arsenal of tools to get what they want, avoid getting into trouble, or cause their parents to blow a fuse out of frustration. And for what, a short-term gain perhaps? Think again.

Throw on top of that raising ones voice, slamming the door and throwing a tantrum make matters only worse. Even if you wear your parents down and get your way, you still lose. You lose their respect and demonstrate immaturity—two factors that will likely undermine your chances at a later date. So let's consider for a moment a more effective approach!

Think about what it is your parents need from you. I know you know, I've worked with enough of you to know that you know! It's trust; and if you want to be trusted, show that you are trustworthy. The question then is how does one show trustworthiness?

First, you need to learn to make good or at least better decisions. Teens often push the limits, causing stress and tension for everyone involved. This often makes a challenge out of the normal concerns that parents already have trusting their teen. A phone call and checking in goes a long way toward demonstrating your maturity and respect for them.

Second, have a plan! If you can work out the transportation, if you can get home by your curfew, if you can promise me that adults are present, if you can get your homework and chores done, "Yes, you can" comes a whole lot easier, if you can answer parental concerns!

Third, be proactive if you want to go places and earn perks from your parents. Don't wait to be nagged before doing chores around the house. The little things add up. Making your bed and keeping your room tidy goes a long way, and you may be surprised how your actions improve your parents' attitude toward you.

Fourth, learn to take a "no" every once in a while ("no's" are a part of real life by the way) and communicate often with your parents about what is going on in your life. Most times it's rather painless.



I believe that there are many more ways of getting to "no" than there are for getting to a "yes". These few simple steps can make a world of difference in your ability to getting to "yes" - a yes for both you and your parents.

Remember Ephesians 6:1-3

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise." You might be surprised how many times you will hear: "Yes. Have a good time and be safe."



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Greg enjoys working with teens and their families
in 4 of our locations: Frankfort, Orland Park,
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