

Parenting teens – turning from boss to consultant.

Sometimes it's hard to keep up with them - your children. It wasn't long ago when you could just tell them what to do and they listened. You were the boss. But now that your kids are teens, you just don't seem to hold the same authority and telling your teen what to do only seems to backfire.

Parenting the teen does take a different approach than parenting younger kids. Looking back it seemed relatively easy. They were born itty-bitty so you could take control – usually to keep them safe from harm, to teach right from wrong and begin to equip them with problem solving and relationship skills. But hey, remember when they were about two or three years old and they began to toddle off and test your limits? This was normal child development and you soon trusted that your child wouldn't touch the stove, muck about in the flowerpots or bite the cat.

Adolescence is kind of similar in process to the two or three year old testing their limits. In adolescence though the test is more towards social limits; who they can go out with, when, where and for how long. Unlike the young child though, adolescence is nerve-wracking because now they are truly out of sight, the stakes are higher and your didn't raise your kid for 13 years plus to see them get into trouble now. Also unlike the young child, your teen is no longer itty-bitty and you can't simply tell them what to do.

Parenting the adolescent requires extreme trust, patience and letting them take responsibility for decisions even when the consequences are not favorable. They do need to learn what the mantle of responsibility means during adolescence so that as adults they are suitably equipped to then carry on responsibly. No practice – no mastery. Taking responsibility takes practice and opportunity.

As difficult as it may seem, the parenting style has to shift from being the boss to being a consultant. Now, no one is saying here that there aren't any rules, but they are more flexible and more subject to negotiation. When you were the boss, you simply told your young child what to do and you expected them to abide by your wishes. Now as a consultant you are more in an advisory position and must rely on the judgment of your teen to choose correctly.

Remember teaching your child to ride a bike. Eventually you let go of the seat and your child went sailing down to sidewalk only to eventually fall and at some point scrape a knee or palm.

As you begin to let go of your teenager, they too will eventually scrape their knee and be hurt, but ultimately they will learn and grow to master relationships and expectations in a responsible manner. Adolescence is a testing ground to learn the rules of adulthood. Let them learn now for success later.

It's all right to hold your breath though. It can be nerve-wracking.

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Buy the book:

To order Direnfeld's book, *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*, send a cheque or money order in the amount of \$12.00 to:

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