

Parenting Angry Teens



The teen years can be some of the most painful and confusing for parents. Previously amicable, kind and happy children can quickly turn into sullen, angry teenagers overnight - and parents are left wondering where things went wrong. Frustration quickly builds, and parents who truly want to have loving, friendly relationships with their teenager simply cannot find the words or actions to reach them. By the time this kind of family decides to go to counseling, things are usually at a breaking point. Parents are hurt and confused, and the teen sees his parents as the enemy. Each side is afraid and this fear often leads to threats - parents threaten to kick the teen out, and the teen threatens to run away from home.

While it can be very painful to deal with this kind of situation, it may help to realize that this intensity is actually a positive sign. If you and your teenager still care enough to fight, it shows that you still care what the other thinks. That means that there is room and potential for communication and reconciliation. Obviously, however, there are actions that will help you reach your teens, and actions that will be counterproductive. If you can realize that the anger, frustration and angst in your teen aren't all about you, you can begin to mend things between you. Here are a few tips we have found particularly effective in mending broken relationships with angry teens.

Don't Quit

The worst thing you can do at this point is to walk away. The families that make it are the ones who hang in there and stubbornly refuse to give up on each other. As hurt, confused and angry as you might feel, don't walk away. Continue expressing love and concern until your child can find healing and balance.

Don't Be so Grim

Remember that having a sense of humor can often salvage an otherwise tense situation. Sure, sometimes your kids' actions are serious, but if you can step back and see the larger picture, you'll often realize how humorous - and normal - the whole thing really is.

Don't Take it Personally

In many cases, a teenager's anger will seem far out of proportion compared to their situation. If you have treated your child with love and kindness and provided well throughout his life, his sudden hostility may seem like a slap in the face. Just remember though, that his anger usually has very little to do with you. Of course, if you have something to apologize for, do it; if not, just be patient and realize that the anger isn't something personal.

Do Understand Your Kid's Fears

Growing up is scary, and that fear is often expressed in your teen's angry outbursts. If you can recognize and acknowledge your child's fears and vulnerability, you'll more easily be able to navigate the emotional minefield of the teen years. Rather than acting like the big shot who knows it all, give your kid opportunities to discuss the fears he may be dealing with.

Do Watch for Depression

Just remember that adolescent depression is a real thing - and angry outbursts or sullen behavior may be symptoms of something a little deeper. If you've tried working with your teen and he still seems unreasonable, professional counseling and screening may be in order.

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