

HEALTHY DISCIPLINE FOR TEENS

Disciplining teens can be tricky business. It's important for them to have enough freedom to make their own mistakes, yet they still need plenty of guidance to help them learn from those mistakes. Provide your teen with clear and consistent discipline that will focus on teaching, and not punishment.

1. Grounding and Restricting Privileges

Often, it's necessary to restrict a teen's privileges. This may include grounding your teen from going places or it may involve taking away privileges for a specified period of time. Restricting your teen's privileges will only be effective if you take away something that your teen enjoys. It should cause enough discomfort so your teen won't be tempted to make the same mistake again. Set clear guidelines about when or how your teen can earn back those privileges.

2. Create a Behavior Contract

Behavior contracts clearly outline your expectations of your teen's behavior. It should also outline what happens if your teen breaks the contract.

A behavior contract can be useful when your teen wants more privileges or when your teen is asking for extra responsibility. Creating a contract ahead of time will help your teen learn the importance of honoring a written deal. It will also help show your teen that privileges need to be earned.

3. Allow for Natural Consequences

Teens sometimes need to experience the natural consequences of their behavior. Often, natural consequences help them learn best.

Natural consequences show teens the reasons for your rules. They can experience first-hand why the rules exist and what the natural consequences are when the rules are broken.

4. Assign Extra Responsibilities

There may be times that it's necessary to impose additional responsibilities for your teen to complete. For example, you can give your child extra chores to do as a consequence for misbehavior. Assigning extra chores or responsibilities will make your teen take proactive measures to address the misbehavior.

5. Ignore Mild Misbehavior

Ignoring can be a very effective consequence when your teen is trying to engage you in a power struggle. However, it's imperative to carefully choose which behaviors you will ignore. Serious or unsafe behaviors should never be ignored.

6. Provide Opportunities for Restitution

Restitution, which is sometimes referred to as restorative justice, means allowing your teen to make amends. It's a way for your teen to make up for some of the damage that has been done if a behavior hurt someone else.

For example, a teen who borrows her sister's shirt without asking and then rips a hole in it, may not only have to buy her sister a new shirt, but might also have to make her sister's bed for the week. Restitution gives your child a chance to try and repair some of the damage that may have been done to a relationship.

7. Provide Logical Consequences

Logical consequences are consequences that are directly related to the misbehavior. For example, if your teen is having difficulty getting up in the morning for school, a logical consequence would mean an earlier bedtime.

Logical consequences help teens remember why they got into trouble in the first place. It can also serve as a good reminder for them to avoid making the same mistake again.

8. Reward Good Behavior

Healthy discipline shouldn't be just about negative consequences. Instead, it should also include some positive reinforcement.

If your teen is struggling with certain issues or behavior, implement a reward system. Sometimes simple rewards can be very effective tools to motivate your teen to change.