

## How Do You Get Respect From Your Teenager?

Respect is that critical 'tool' that all parents need to survive the adolescent parenting years. Virtually every piece of research confirms that teenagers who respect their parents have a greater chance of getting through the teen years with greater ease and with fewer scrapes. When our kids are young, we can be very directive because they are more dependent on us and generally obey. Teenagers resist the directive approach. They call it control. They need to be *influenced* by us instead. Influence comes with respect.

I have met many parents over the years who want my help because their son or daughter's behaviour shows little respect for them. When I see them, their teenager usually looks very sullen and angry. Their head is down and they make it as obvious as possible that they do not want to be there. Parents sometimes think that some 'werewolf' has taken residence in their once sweet child. Well, if that is true, then respect is the silver bullet to slay him. It is almost that simple. When you want respect you have to give it.

Earning respect is hard and takes lots of time and effort. We all learn that the title of parent doesn't automatically give us it. Respect comes with lots of blood, sweat and tears over the years. Respect is like "an emotion held in the eyes of your child as they look at you. It is a fine glass, hard to create, and easily shattered." according to Michael Bradley author of [Yes, Your Teen is Crazy: Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind.](#)

With some self reflection most parents can recognize their own self-serving or disrespectful behaviour. Most do not realize its effect on their son or daughter. Demonstrating respect by example is a powerful way to teach your adolescent how to give respect in return. Below are two lists drawn from my own experience and Dr. Bradley's book.

### What Teenagers Say Destroys Their Respect for You:

- When you retaliate to their attacks in kind with insults and hurtful words.
- When you are sarcastic, roll your eyes or say something under your breath.
- How you act after having your sixth drink.
- When you beg or demand their affection.
- When you are so weak in character and restraint that you use physical force with them and then say to yourself they deserved it.
- When you act like a teenager when upset.
- When you act like a teenager to be cool.
- When you act the opposite of cool, believing that fear and punishment from authority, the way you were raised, is a good way to parent.
- When you resort to angry threats and force to get them to do something.
- When they discover your extra-marital affair.
- When they see you and your spouse quarrelling disrespectfully, and not resolving the problems in your marriage
- When you don't recognize how much it hurts to have parents who are divorced

### What Teenagers Say Increases Their Respect for You:

- Your honesty, especially when you admit your mistakes
- Your persistence, like when you constantly offer your help with some homework or assignment, even when rejected
- Consistently showing up to their games and performances even when they've said they don't care if you come.
- Offering affection without demanding it in return.
- When you laugh at yourself when you goof up because it makes it easier to help them tell you about theirs.
- When you don't take their messiness personally. Especially if you are a very neat and orderly person yourself.
- When you express how scared and sad you are when they do something stupid like coming home really late at night or drinking and driving.
- When you work hard to provide for them without complaining or holding it over them by expecting more gratitude.
- How you stay composed when they expect you to get really angry with them for something they've done.
- How you treasure your spouse and show how special they are to you after all these years.
- How you teach them by the way you live more than by telling them and lecturing.
- When you let them make decisions that they know you wanted to control but don't so as to help them become more responsible.
- When they are going nuts about some drama they are involved in and you listen and stay calm.

Your teenager is a version of you. Until they are old enough to live independently, they are influenced by primarily by two sources: your genes and your relationship. The degree of influence of each may be a matter of debate. Nevertheless, your influence with your teenager will be much greater when you continually nurture their respect for you by showing respect for them.