

Parenting Your Tween – Have a Plan

Many parents dread raising a tween or teen. They fear a loss of control. As they seek a good discipline method, they hope to avoid behavior issues. Also, parents want their kids to learn to make good decisions.

It is normal for all kids to want to be independent. As they figure out who they are, they often push their parents' limits. Challenging behaviors can include:

- Attitudes
- Smoking
- Sexting
- Lying
- Bad language.
- Defiance
- Drug use
- Drinking
- Cheating

No one foolproof method prevents bad behaviors. However, parents with a plan can address problem behaviors *before* they arise. Firm, fair and consistent parents:

- 1. Expect good behavior.** Kids often behave as parents expect them to behave. Many parents give their kids the message that all kids are destined to misbehave. Thus, they do not discipline regularly. If kids hear a parent say, "All kids do the opposite of what their parents want!", they learn to do the opposite. Use positive and "behave" messages.
- 2. Establish rules.** Make sure your tween knows and understands the rules. Be specific. For example, set curfew times. Review the rules often.

- 3. Give your tween gradual control of his life.** Avoid being too strict or too permissive. When mistakes happen, help your teen learn from the mistake. Sometimes natural consequences work. Other times, you must assign a consequence for a poor decision.
- 4. Pay attention to your tween.** Observe her attitudes, moods and words. Sometimes anger is related to stress – not defiance. Put away your smart phone during meals and evening time.
- 5. Control your temper.** When you get angry, take time to cool-off. Plan how to deal with the behavior. Yelling and physical punishment *do not teach*. They are not effective.
- 6. Teach coping skills to help handle stress.** Discuss the "here and now". Help them know what they can and cannot control and how to cope. Practice coping skills often. After-school activities and sports programs may help relieve stress.

- 7. When you make a mistake with discipline, rethink what you said and did.** Talk with your teen. Admit your mistake. Apologize if necessary. Make a new discipline plan.

When what you are doing does not work, re-group. Try something new.



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