

BASED ON 20 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL COACHING EXPERIENCE

How to Communicate Effectively and Handle Difficult Teenagers



PRESTON NI
COMMUNICATION COACHING

Also by Preston C. Ni

How to Communicate Effectively and Handle Difficult People, 2nd Edition

Communication Success with Four Personality Types

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"Good habits formed at youth make all the difference."

— Aristotle

"(Some young people) don't know who they are, what they can be or even want to be. They are afraid, but they don't know of what. They are angry, but they don't know at whom. They are rejected and they don't know why. All they want is to be somebody."

— Thomas Monson

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How to Successfully Handle

Difficult Teenagers

Teenagers are a unique and often self-contradictory breed. As a group, they strive for individuality yet crave peer acceptance. They act like they know everything and yet lack much experience. They feel invincible and yet are often insecure. Some teenagers thrive on testing and challenging authority. A few may be self-destructive.

It's not easy when you have to deal with difficult teenagers in your life, whether they are your children, students, athletes, group members, or employees. What can you do in the face of a challenging adolescent? Below are seven keys to successfully handle teenagers. Not all of the tips below may apply to your particular situation. Simply utilize what works and leave the rest.

This reference guide presumes that the teenager(s) in question, despite some challenges, is generally doing okay in life. In cases of severe mental, emotional, or behavioral issues, seek medical, mental health, administrative, legal, or law enforcement professionals for help.

1. Avoid Giving Away Your Power

“Teenage hearts are raw and new, fast and fierce, and they do not know their own strength. Neither do they know reason or restraint.”

— Catherynne Valente

One of the most common characteristics of difficult teenagers is that they love to push your buttons and make you react negatively. This can be done in a variety of ways, including and not limited to teasing, disobeying, not listening, back talking, temper throwing, rule breaking, dismissing, haggling, and provoking. With these acts, a teenager is simultaneously feeling his or her power (immature as it may be), testing the limits of his boundaries with you, and impressing both himself and his peers. During these moments, the more reactive and upset you become, the more the teenager will think she has power over you - she has succeeded in pushing your buttons!

The first rule of thumb in the face of a difficult teenager is to keep your cool. The less reactive you are to provocations, the more you can use your better judgment to handle the situation. When you feel upset or challenged by a teen, before you say or do something that may exacerbate the situation, take a deep breath and count slowly to ten. In many instances, by the time you reach ten, you would have regained composure, and figured out a better response to the issue, so that you can reduce, instead of exacerbate the problem. If you're still upset after counting to ten, take a time out if possible, and revisit the issue after you calm down.

2. Establish Clear Boundaries

There's more to this excerpt!

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