

Teen Challenge Your Authority?

Contributed by Mark Gregston
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Does your teen challenge your authority as parents? Is your home in constant emotional turmoil? Here is some guidance for parents from teen behavior expert, Mark Gregston.

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Does your teen challenge your authority? In fact, does your teen challenge ALL authority? Is your home, therefore, in constant turmoil and are the authorities often at your doorstep? Let me give you some quick guidance and steps you can take with your teen.

{bot_wrgoogle}1. Don't be afraid to ask some pointed questions. Seek out the root cause of the child acting this way. This often requires the assistance of a trained counselor. Communication is key at this time. If the lines of communication are down, then re-establish them. No matter how the teen challenges you, be determined to establish the lines of communications and make sure you ask questions.

2. Know (and communicate with your teen) what behaviors you'll allow in your home and what you won't. I encourage families to early on develop their home's Belief System — a way to determine what you hold to be true and the principles upon which you will base your rules for living and the consequences for violation of those rules. Your home would then be governed by what you believe in and have agreed to, rather than "shooting from the hip" every time something comes up that you haven't discussed. It's a policy and procedure manual for your home. It's never too late. Spend some time today determining how you want to live and put some feet to it to insure that all those involved understand those boundaries.

3. There must be consequences for inappropriate behavior...without exception. As parents, we are so relational that often we are unable to do what is needed to send a strong message to our kids to "not go this way" for fear of losing a relationship with them. Sadly, most parents don't understand that most kids want direction, correction, and help moving through the transition to adulthood. Tom Landry once said, "A coach makes people do things they don't want to do so they can get to a place where they do want to be." Parents must do the same for their children. And I'm not talking about corporal punishment. There is a place for that in limited fashion for younger children, but you will get nowhere with it with a teenager, and may get it right back in your face. What I'm talking about for consequences are things like taking away their cell phone for a day, or not allowing them to drive the car for a few days.

4. There are times when a teen challenges your authority too much, and the police may need to be involved. That's usually when your counselor may recommend placing the teen in a program or facility. This is a reasonable option for many teens today, providing them with help to get through some difficult situations. The better programs are designed to correct their thinking and resulting behaviors. This is usually a "last ditch" effort, when all other options and attempts at helping your child have been exhausted.

At some point, when all has failed, you will be the one to decide the next step. It really doesn't matter what your child thinks (they certainly won't want to go to a program), as it's evident that he/she is not thinking very well. So, when

that time comes...remember, it is not about you. This is not the time to spend mulling over where you as parents may have gone wrong. It's not a time to shift the blame, make accusations, question motives, or withdraw and disengage from your child. It's not a time to spend determining if you are a failure as a parent, but it is a time to make sure that you don't fail in your attempt to help your child now, at a time when he or she needs you most.

Look for a program that offers a relational atmosphere and structured setting amidst a staff that is passionate about helping your child. The combination of activity, counseling, and structure, immersed in an arena of relationships can provide a setting that encourages change.

I won't go into detail or recommend any particular program, but I would encourage you to search the internet and look at all types of therapeutic programs to find the best "fit." And I would measure that "fit" by what is offered to your child, who the staff is, their staff to student ratio, counseling perspective, and the location of their program, so that you will be able to participate in the process that your child is going through.

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