



STRATEGY: LET YOUR TEENAGER KNOW THAT THEY CAN TRUST YOU



"It just seemed like Michael hated us all the time. At times we wondered what happened to the lovely little guy we used to know. But we hung in there and didn't give up our job as parents. After a couple of years, he grew out of it – taking up playing rugby, being more respectful to us, and becoming a popular mate with his friends."

It's normal for a teenager to, at some point, not particularly like mum and dad. If your teen doesn't like you, and disagrees with you at every opportunity, chances are you are simply doing your job as a parent in raising your kids. It's also normal for teens to shift their emotional attachment from you to their friends. This is part of "growing up" but it is still important to maintain a strong family connection by providing a safe base for them to return to.

Trust and respect are a two way street. They have to be earned on both sides. If you behave in a manner that a parent should - nurturing, caring, taking an interest and putting in place boundaries - then eventually when your kids have a problem, they will come to you. When they do, it is vital that you show them respect and trust. Try to hear them out and not be judgemental. Put yourself in their shoes and then, using your years of wisdom, give them some practical advice – if that's what they want! They may just need to offload – so listen, hear and let them know that you are a safe place. Don't 'interfere' or break their confidence – respect your teen and show that you can be trusted. You may not like what you hear, however ask yourself the question – what would you prefer? To know what is happening in your teen's world or to be completely in the dark?

Show them this trust and respect and they will come back to you, your relationship will grow stronger and closer as they mature.



**BE THE KIND OF
PERSON YOU WANT
YOUR TEENAGER TO
GROW UP TO BE.**

ROLE MODEL



STRATEGY:

ACT THE WAY YOU'D LIKE YOUR KIDS TO ACT LEAD BY EXAMPLE

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Be the kind of person you want your teenager to grow up to be.

Kids in general, tend to grow up to be a lot like their parents. They know who you are and what you do. The way **you** act plays a major role in the way they will behave. Kids who live in homes where parents smoke are more likely to become smokers. Parents who do drugs or abuse alcohol are more likely to find their kids do the same. Just as our kids can learn and copy our bad behaviours, they can also learn good ones – when we make the effort to show them.

Teach your teenagers how to handle difficult situations, how to be honest, how to be kind, how to be brave, how to say sorry, how to communicate effectively and how to love. Help them to say 'no'. Remember a stubborn child is one that knows their own mind and values. As that stubborn child grows into a teenager, and eventually an adult, that stubborn streak will help them to say "no" and to be their own person.

Be an imperfect parent. No one is perfect. Admit your mistakes and don't be afraid to say, "I am sorry." Share stories about when you were a teenager. **Be real.**

Think about what you say

Be aware of how you speak about, and behave around, alcohol. If your kids see you stagger in the door each night moaning, "I need a drink!" or reaching for the booze and shouting, "This calls for a drink!" every time there is something to celebrate, they are receiving strong messages about the role of alcohol.

"Dad comes home everyday with a six-pack of beers. He says it helps him relax.... But after a while, he just starts shouting at mum and she gets upset."

Think about what you do....

If your kids know you've had a few drinks – and then drive – you are modelling that it is ok to drink and drive. And if you think you can sneak a cigarette when they aren't looking, you are wrong - they smell it.

"Mum hides her booze in the boot of the car. She doesn't think we know its there. There's never any food in the fridge but always she has her booze stashed away. She doesn't really care about us kids....."

Think about how you respond....

When you react to people and situations by using harsh words or violence, your kids get the idea that it is ok to disrespect people. And in turn – it will be you who they show the same to.

*"My dad told me I couldn't go to my mates place but when I asked him why, he just swore at me and told me to f*** off. I told him to do the same – and then he hit me. I don't ask him no more."*



YOUR EXAMPLE IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO RAISE A CHILD.

All the advice in the world to a teenager will count for little if you don't walk the walk.

- Find healthy ways to relax after work or to have fun on week-ends without alcohol or other drugs.
- Let them see you model sensible drinking behaviour such as ...
 - ~ sometimes refusing a drink when it is offered
 - ~ counting the number of standard drinks you are consuming
 - ~ enjoying non-alcoholic drinks
 - ~ refusing to drink when you are driving
 - ~ not drinking till you are drunk
- Eat healthy and exercise – even if it's just going for a walk together.
- Share your thoughts and feelings.
- Admit when you are wrong and apologise.

You may find that some of these are not always easy. If we expect our young people not to drink at all, or to drink sensibly when they are older, we need to show them how it is done.



KIDS WHOSE PARENTS KNOW WHO THEIR FRIENDS ARE, WHERE THEY ARE - AND WHAT THEY ARE UP TO - ARE LESS LIKELY TO GET INTO TROUBLE.

KNOW WHAT YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE UP TO