

Surviving the “Teenage Tornado” . . .

Typically, the teenage years are turbulent times for parents and teens alike. They rush in like uncontrolled whirlwinds bringing emotional, social, and physical changes and leave everyone in their wake. They threaten the hopes and dreams of parents and shake the entire family foundation. Even those who maintain a godly home and provide unconditional love can find themselves caught up in the terrible throes of their “teenage tornado.”

Take heart. You are not alone. Natural disasters drive people to their knees in dependence on God. Likewise, natural adolescence shakes you out of your “parental comfort zone” and thrusts you into a state of emergency. As you cry out to God for help, He will prove Himself faithful to you.

Although you cannot control your teen’s actions or attitudes, you can influence him by how you speak to him. *“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” (Ephesians 4:29)*

Q: “As a parent, I feel unloving when I discipline my teenager—even if he is guilty.”

The God-given role of a parent is to establish boundaries with rewards and repercussions—rewards for staying within the boundary and repercussions for crossing over the boundary. To “convict” a teenager for their wrong attitudes and actions is not unloving. Enforcing boundaries blesses them by enabling them to experience the consequences of knowing right from wrong.

*“Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.”
(Proverbs 24:25)*

Q: “Aren’t teenagers too old for parental discipline?”

No. Accountability is necessary for everyone of any age.

Q: “When my teen crosses a boundary, how can I enforce the repercussions without feeling harsh and wrong?”

In choosing to cross a boundary, your teen is choosing a repercussion. You are merely enforcing what your teen has chosen! Remember God’s purposes for proper discipline. Boundaries are not just external limits with negative consequences. The goal of good boundaries is to develop internal boundaries or self-control that leads to godly character.

*“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”
(Hebrews 12:11)*

Targets for Parents of Teens

If you aim at nothing, you're bound to hit it! To be the best parent possible, you need well-defined targets to keep you focused in the right direction.

Target #1 . . . Personal Identity

- Have your own identity strongly rooted in Christ. (Galatians 2:20)
- See your teen as a significant and unique creation of God. (Jeremiah 29:11)
- Discern your teens' natural inclinations, interests, and abilities. (Proverbs 22:6)
- Express more praise than disapproval. (Proverbs 18:21)
- Explain that God's specific plan is to develop the character of Christ in all His children. (Romans 8:29)

Target #2 . . . Individual Responsibility

- Be a person of integrity and accountability. (Proverbs 10:9)
- Allow your teen to take part in establishing appropriate boundaries and consequences. (Proverbs 29:17)
- Teach your teens the importance of fulfilling commitments. (Numbers 30:2–4)
- Guide your teens toward developing financial responsibility. (Proverbs 20:21)
- Help your teens make practical and moral choices. (Proverbs 16:3)

Target #3 . . . Healthy Intimacy

- Communicate your positive and negative feelings honestly. (Psalm 51:6)
- Ask questions on the feeling level rather than just on the fact level. (Proverbs 20:5)
- Encourage supportive relationships with others who are role models. (Hebrews 13:7)
- Readily admit when you've wronged someone, ask forgiveness, and make restitution. (Proverbs 28:13)
- Share insights about how to treat members of the opposite sex. (Proverbs 18:15)

Target #4 . . . Spiritual Maturity

- Model the character of Christ, for this is your most powerful influence. (Titus 2:7–8)
- Teach God's Word as the absolute authority and standard. (2 Timothy 3:16)
- Pray for God to bring repercussions when your teen chooses a destructive path. (Hebrews 12:6)
- Explain the value in standing alone and separating from the compromises of the world. (2 Corinthians 6:17–18)

Key Verses to Memorize

“These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”
(Deuteronomy 6:6–7)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Ephesians 3:16–19

Motivational Pointers for Parents

Examine your motive for wanting your teenager to change. (Psalm 139:23–24)

Nurture the needs of your teenager. (Ephesians 4:29)

Create an environment where it is okay to fail. (Romans 15:7)

Orchestrate small steps to achievable goals. (Proverbs 16:23)

Use the sandwich method to confront failure. (Proverbs 15:23)

• Bread of praise: “You are really doing well.”

• Meat of criticism: “Let's work on improving so you can do better.”

• Bread of exhortation: “I'm so proud of you. I know you will succeed.”

Recognize and compliment the positive efforts and attitudes. (Proverbs 13:12)

Admit your own feelings. (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

Go to the Lord in prayer. (Psalm 116:2)

Ensure your own spiritual stability. (Psalm 119:10)

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”
(Colossians 3:21)

Thank-You's from Teens

Don't expect a bouquet of thank-you's from your sprouting adolescents for the sacrifice and worry you experience on their behalf. Blossoms of gratitude don't usually appear until your teenagers are away from home and facing the pressures of life in a less-than-kind world.¹

Live in such a way that one day you may hear . . .

- "Thank you for giving me a Christian heritage."²
- "Thank you for giving me the freedom to fail."³
- "Thank you for being my parent and not my buddy."
- "Thank you for being friendly to my friends."
- "Thank you for providing more love than money."⁴
- "Thank you for saying no when it would have been easier to say yes."

Related Topics . . .

- The Blended Family:
God's Recipe for Success
- Identity: Who Are You?
Do You Know Who You Really Are?
- Parenting:
Steps for Successful Parenting
- Rebellion:
Reclaiming the Rebel
- Single Parenting:
Success with God as Your Partner

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For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. For the following section see Jay Kesler, ed. and Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Parents & Teenagers* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1984), 132.

2. Paul Warren and Bruce Grant, *Kids in Crisis* (Minirth-Meier Clinic, n.d.), audiocassette.

3. John White, *Parents in Pain: Overcoming the Hurt & Frustration of Problem Children* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 164.

4. Ross Campbell, *How to Really Love Your Teenager*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), 29-35.



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