

4 Ways You Could End Up With a Teen Who Hates You

Imagine me holding the ends of two very long strings in between my thumb and finger.

The strings go a long way off into the distance side by side. Now imagine if one of those strings went left, but only by the slightest degree. If you followed the strings, they would appear to be side by side for a while; however, eventually they would end up further and further apart.

That's what it can be like for many parents of kids moving from childhood into adolescence. They had been parenting a certain way and it was working fine. Then things changed. All of a sudden there was attitude and rebellion. The harder the parents try, the worse things seem to get. Oftentimes they wonder, "Where did my sweet little kid go?"

The reality is that as kids grow and move into the teen years, a parent has to change the way he or she parents. Over the years, I have seen many parents of teens struggle while also hearing plenty of feedback from the teen side of things. You may be asking yourself, "I wonder why my teenager hates me. How did we get here?" There are a couple of behaviors or approaches to parenting teens that will drive the strings further apart. Avoiding those is important in order to have a good and open relationship with your teenagers. Here are four ways to end up with a teen who hates you.

Assume You Know and Understand, When You Don't

If you don't take the time to listen to them, you will lose their trust pretty quickly. The reason most teenagers don't want to be around adults is because they feel like adults don't understand them and yet continue to bark out advice like experts. Don't assume that you know what they're going through

just because you were a teen once. You may have wisdom to offer, but it will miss the mark without a rich combination of context and empathy.

Follow Up Every Compliment With a Criticism

It's natural to see things that they need to work on and want to correct it immediately, maybe even on an hourly basis. Choose your battles and the most important ones. Imagine if 50 percent of your interactions with your boss were criticisms. You'd probably want to quit or avoid him or her. Think of it like currency you are spending. If every criticism or "opportunity for growth" is one dollar, every encouraging word or fun activity with them is worth about 20 cents. Do five for one. Earn the right, and it will increase the chance of them listening.

Project Your Agenda on Their Life

They serve a world of adult agendas. Many adults care less about nurturing kids than utilizing them for their own pursuits. Companies market them to buy stuff that strips them of their childhood early, being overwhelmed by homework so schools can win an award, a coach who wants a championship, a youth pastor that pressures them to bring their friends because he wants a successful program. Don't get me wrong. I know many amazing teachers, coaches and youth leaders, but teens today are contending with too many adult agendas. Be different and you will win their heart. Nurture them toward their dreams, not someone else's, particularly yours.

Pressure Them to Perform

I recently saw a documentary about kids in sports. One father, a former college football player, was adamant that he needed to be hard on his son to get him to perform better. With every interaction, his teenage son's demeanor would sink. It was painful to watch, and I spent most of the two hours angry. It was easy to see the son wanting more and more to be away from

his father. Unfortunately, the father was oblivious as he pontificated his parenting philosophy, expecting people to give him a standing ovation.

Teens don't need pressure from parents. They already get enough everywhere else. They need unconditional love and guidance. {eoa}

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