

When Teens Are Disrespectful or Disobedient

This morning started out fantastic! I sang “Happy Half-Birthday to Me” as I got ready. I was on time picking up the carpool kids and early to their school. Traffic was fantastic, and when I got home, my littlest one started playing happily in my office while I pulled out my Bible and journal.

Ten minutes later, an unwelcome guest knocked at the door of my heart. I looked through the peephole, and he seemed harmless enough, so I let him in.

Don’t answer the door for strangers.

I welcomed frustration into my spirit over a situation involving some of my students. I let it ruin my so-far-wonderful morning.

Teenagers Cause Stress

I’ve been working with teenagers for the past 12 years, first as a youth sponsor for my church, with the last seven years as a youth minister’s wife. I’m coaching cheerleading for one of our local high schools, and let me tell you, teens don’t have to be your own child to stress you out.

If you’re a parent and you’re frustrated, meet me at the local Starbucks. I’ll buy you a cuppa.

As I’m raising my three boys and dealing with other people’s teens six out of seven days of the week, the two main sources of my frustration come from the following places.

Disrespect

Sometimes you’re stressed at your teen because they are blatantly disrespectful. My caution here is never let your

child back-sass you. If you allow it, it opens a whole world of authority figures that they now see as free game to be a smart aleck to.

I can tell which parents of our cheerleaders demand respect at home, because they are respectful to us coaches. It's also blatantly obvious which teens are allowed to say whatever they want with no real punishment. They mouth off to us too.

Disobedience

Sometimes disobedience is outright defiance. But the harder issue is when their disobedience is disguised in the form of a good deed. For example, all you have in your wallet is a \$20 bill, which you need part of to pay for cash-only parking later that evening for an event. Your kid needs lunch money, so you hand her the \$20 but tell her to only spend what she needs for lunch (roughly \$5-\$7) and bring the rest home.

When you get home from work to do a lightning-fast change of clothes, you ask for your change, only to find out there isn't any. Her best friend forgot her lunch money, and your daughter felt bad for her, so they spent the whole thing. Now you're forced to be late because you have to swing by the ATM.

What do you do? How do you handle a kid who had pure motives but disobeyed? Do you still punish, or are your words of disappointment enough? It wasn't as if your kid blew the money on junk.

This is the kind of thing that keeps me shaking my head.

Any advice? What would you do? Tell us on Facebook!

*Five months after winning the Florida Christian Writers Conference 2012 Writer of the Year award, **Bethany Jett** signed contracts with the MacGregor Literary Agency and Regal Publishing. Her debut book, The Cinderella Rule, hit*

bookstores in April 2013.