



Eight Rules for Parents

Rev. C. Galea, was assigned to Guelph Correctional Center. He asked the boys to think about their lives and figure out why they ended up in an institution for delinquents. It was the boys who came up with this Code for Parents.

1. Keep cool. Don't lose your temper in the crunch. Keep the lid on when things go wrong. Children are great imitators. (Ephesians 6:4)
2. Don't get string out from too much booze or too many pills. When we see our parents reaching for those crutches we get the idea that it's perfectly OK to go for a bottle or a capsule when things get heavy. We lose respect fast for parents who tell us to behave one way while they are behaving another way. (Ephesians 5:18)
3. Bug us a little. Be strict and consistent in dishing out discipline. Show us who's boss. It gives us a feeling of security to know we've got some strong supports under us. (Ephesians 6:4)
4. Don't blow your class. Keep the dignity of parenthood. Stay on that pedestal. Your children have put you there because they need someone to look up to. Don't try to dress, dance or talk like your kids. You embarrass us and you look ridiculous. (I Corinthians 13:11)
5. Light a candle. Show us the way. Tell us God is not dead, or sleeping, or on vacation. We need to believe in something bigger and stronger than ourselves. (Ephesians 5:8)
6. Scare the bad out of us. If you catch us lying, stealing, or being cruel get tough. Let us know WHY what we did was wrong. Impress on us the importance of not repeating such behavior. When we need punishment, dish it out...but let us know you still love us, even though we have let you down. It'll make us think twice before we make the same move again. (Hebrews 12:9)
7. Call our bluff. Make it clear that you mean what you say. Don't be wishy-washy. Don't compromise. And don't be intimidated by our threats to drop out of school or leave home. Stand firm. If you collapse, we will know we beat you down and we will not be happy about the —"victory". Kids don't want everything they ask for. (Ephesians 6:13)
8. Be honest with us. Tell the truth no matter what. And be straight-arrow about it. Lukewarm answers make us uneasy. We can smell uncertainty a mile away. This means being generous with praise. If you give us kids a few compliments once in a while we will be able to accept criticism more readily. We want you to tell it like it is. (Ephesians 4:15)



Stumbling Blocks for Parents

Adapted from Scott Sells book, Treating the Tough Adolescent

1. Rules and consequences are not clearly defined before a rule is broken.
2. Rules are optional rather than mandatory.
3. There are too many rules to master at any one time.
4. The consequences are not effective enough, or they change rules or consequences midstream.
5. Rules & consequences are not written down in contract form.
6. Parents fail to anticipate relapse and are unprepared for relapses.

How Parents Push Adolescent's Buttons

1. **Preaching or using clichés** – they go instantly deaf.
2. **Talking in chapters** – 7 word rule.
3. **Labeling** – Teens hate it when parents use “you always” or “you never”. These become self-fulfilling prophecies.
4. **Futurizing** – Talking about the future in negative terms, you will never get a job, get into college, a date, etc. These result in hurt feelings and resentment.
5. **Instant problem solving** – The real need is often just to feel listened to. And you can't do this if you are talking. Hummm, really?, Oh, gosh, yeah?, Mmmm, Wow– These responses just encourage your teen to talk to you.
6. **Questioning the teen's restlessness and discontent** – This is normal. If your teen did know what the problem was they still could not say, “Look Mom or Dad, I am torn by conflicting emotions, engulfed by irrational urges, and confused by raging hormones, and afraid of the future.”
7. **Not tolerating experimental behavior** – Clothing and hair. This will work itself out. Save your energy for the bigger issues: drugs, alcohol, skipping school, curfew, etc. Today earrings, body piercing, and body art are popular with teens. The subject of tattoos will come up. These are a matter of personal preference and push the limits of parental tolerance, and they can become a major battleground if you let it. Discussing it does not equal agreeing to it. Let your teen talk about it—advantages, disadvantages, meanings—these big decisions require thought and often can be put off for months or modified with the right parental attitude. Remember tattoos can be removed, holes close up. This is not a Chernobyl nuclear disaster if it happens.
8. **Collecting criticisms** – Insults and criticisms cut deeper when they come from parents and they can damage the inner spirit. Unlike physical bruises, they can take years to heal. Insults and criticism shuts down communication and reinforces the behaviors until they become permanent fixtures within the teen's personality.