

# Tools for Parenting Teens

## Figuring out Consequences

Your teen has broken a rule or gotten into trouble:

### What are the consequences?

It's not always easy to figure out. Forget about punishment (making them suffer) and focus on consequences that will help your teen:

- learn from their mistakes
- make it right
- make better future choices
- earn back your (or other's) trust

There's no one size fits all response to teen misbehavior. Consider:

**Can your teen be involved in the discussion of consequences?** The curfew is 11:00. You came in at midnight two nights in a row. What do you think should happen?

**Is the natural consequence enough?** Natural consequences are those that happen 'naturally' without any intervention by you: You don't wear your raincoat, you get wet.

You don't do your homework, you hurt your grade.

**Does NO consequence make sense?** Every misbehavior does not need a CONSEQUENCE imposed by parents. Other options include: reinforce/remind teen re: expectations, have conversation about values, let others impose consequences (School, legal)

If you decide that a parent-imposed consequence is needed, consider:

**Is there a logical consequence?** You don't do your homework, you can't go out during the weekdays. You ruin your sister's sweater, you do extra chores to earn \$ to buy her a new sweater. This is different than natural consequences because you as the parent decide you think something is logical. Your teen may not agree!

**Is it reasonable?** If you were looking in from the outside, would you think this was "fair"?

**Is it respectful?** Any consequence that shames or humiliates will do more harm than good, damage your connection with your teen and often invite rebellion.

**Does it relate at all to the offense?** A related consequence is more effective. She uses her phone to send inappropriate texts, you restrict her phone usage and/or add monitoring. He doesn't do his chores, you're not driving him to his friend's house until the chores are done.

**Is there a problem solving approach that might work better than consequences?**

He's skipping school? Why? How could he be more supported at school? She's smoking marijuana? Why? Is it helping her with social anxiety? This works well with predictable problems. Talk to your teen and other caring involved adults; work together to find a solution.

**Always consider your teen's age and maturity level when giving consequences.**

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