

Raising Resilient Teens: Hot tips on responding when the going gets tough

Article by Karyn Chalk, September 2021



Let's face it - Parenting Teenagers is Tricky

We all know that parenting teenagers can be a very challenging experience. And when they are finding life tough, and are behaving in all sorts of ways, knowing how to respond to them can be a bit overwhelming. Response styles may not be effective anymore and can actually make the situation worse.

My vision at Changing Ways is to provide parents and people working with teenager's tools to respond to tricky teens in a way that keeps the doors of communication open at home. If we can achieve that, the likelihood of self-harm, depression and at-risk behaviours decreases and there are increased opportunities for parents to support their teenagers during these challenging times.

As parents we are all the same page

Let's face it, we all want our teenagers to have the skills to put situations into perspective, find solutions that take them towards their goals and have the confidence to ask for help

when life gets tough. Resilient teenagers grow up with the ability to bounce back when tough times come their way.

The stark truth is that depression in teenagers is on the rise and research indicates that parents are the ones who can dramatically change these statistics. As parents we have a massive influence on the degree to which the skills of resilience and problem solving are taught. Our teenagers can learn how to problem solve only if they are given the chance and space to work the problem out themselves. So if you have a teenager who is finding life tough I've listed some things you can do to take you from door slamming, yelling and long bouts of silence to having a teenager who is happy, confident and resilient.

These strategies will benefit your teenager by:

- Giving them the space to work through their problem
- Encouraging them to be trusted and self-responsible

These strategies will benefit you by:

- Keeping the doors of communication open at home
- Allowing you to trust your teenager to make the right choices



Put a stake in the ground. As parents we all want our teenagers to be resilient. Get a clear picture of what your resilient teenager will look like in the future. Then, when responding to your Tricky Teen, ask yourself this question – How do I need to respond right now that will take me towards my goal of having a resilient teenager? Sometimes the right thing in the moment is saying nothing, especially if emotions are running high.



Build a bank deposit. You can only influence your teenager when you have a relationship with them and they are willing to listen to what you have to say. It's like you can only buy a house with a 20% deposit. Small activities like hanging on the couch, chatting in the car, having a laugh are very helpful deposits for your relationship.



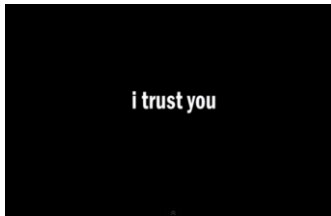
Stop and think before opening your mouth. When your teenager is finding life tough what they don't want is your reassurance, the conversation changed, you to fix things for them or to demand they stop what they are doing. These responses will bring all communication to a halt. So if in doubt – do nothing, say nothing!!!



Start listening, as if your life depends on it. The stark truth is we all think we are great listeners and the reality is very different (talking from personal experience here). So when your teenager talks about their stuff, stop, breathe and really tune in to what they are saying. Then reflect back to them how they are feeling or their experience of the situation.



Ditch your ego. As parents we think that if we can fix a situation for our teenagers or problem solve for them then we are being caring and helpful. Sometimes this is true, sometimes not. To have resilient teenagers we need to step back and support them to solve problems for themselves.



Find opportunities to trust your teenager. When teenagers are behaving badly there is a tendency to want to hone in on punishing. And all that does is increase defiance, resistance and rebellion. So here's another way of responding that really works. Say to your teenager something like this – “Hey I feel pretty uncomfortable with you being at McDonalds at that time of night and I trust you to make decisions that will keep you safe.” Go on try it!

Please also feel free to download a free copy of my ebook :Responding To Tricky Teens at www.changingways.co.nz

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Karyn Chalk lives in Dunedin, New Zealand. She has qualifications in Applied Science (Human Nutrition), Education and Dispute Resolution, combined with 25 years' experience in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP). Karyn is able to masterfully combine her theoretical knowledge and practical coaching experience to tailor her approach for outstanding results as a life coach, mediator and dispute resolution consultant. She has a natural ability to reach the heart of a wide range of problems in a relaxed, pragmatic and friendly way.

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