

Setting healthy boundaries with your teen

May 26 2023



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Ah, the teenage years. A time when your teen is looking to plant their flag of independence—and that's healthy. But there are times when your teen will see how far they can push boundaries, making you feel lost about how to parent your way through those turbulent moments of slammed doors and rolled eyes.

"You may not think it, but kids actually crave [boundaries](#)," says Lisa Foley, a licensed clinical psychologist at Huntsman Mental Health Institute at University of Utah Health. "Setting personal boundaries helps to reduce conflict while creating a trusting relationship." Foley advises parents to listen to their teen without interrupting (it's hard, we know) and discuss what behaviors are acceptable.

Boundaries create digital safe zones

With a smartphone in every teen's pocket and a computer monitor in every bedroom, teens have more ways to spend their free time than ever before. But those hours spent with tech come with a cost: increased anxiety, a loss of privacy, and exposure to unhealthy online relationships. It's important to approach internet safety with curiosity, not an agenda. Have an open chat about boundary-crossing online behaviors. When teens feel safe because of your rules, they can approach challenges with confidence.

Privileges, not punishment

Focus on rewarding your teen with privileges. Those privileges, such as using the car and increasing the time allowed online, come with your teen showing responsibility. It also helps avoid those no-win power struggles.

Keep the big picture in focus

It's easy to get caught up in the moment and take outbursts personally. Instead, focus on the [life skills](#) you want your teen to develop from conflict solving to critical thinking. Remember, disrespectful teen behavior is not a sign you're failing as a parent. It means your teen is acting like a normal teen. You may remember those years of your own!

Boundaries create learning experiences

Establishing boundaries for your teen keeps them safe while recognizing their growing need for independence. It's also a smart way to create a [learning experience](#) for your [teen](#) by helping them set limits for themselves, which is important for when they head off on their own.

Don't hesitate to reach out

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988, which offers easy-to-access compassionate care for people experiencing any type of [mental health crisis](#), including thoughts of suicide, [self-harm](#), and substance use, or any [emotional distress](#) for either themselves or their loved ones.

Provided by University of Utah Health Sciences

Citation: Setting healthy boundaries with your teen (2023, May 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-healthy-boundaries-teen.html>

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