

Being a parent to a teenager can be frustrating. Adolescents are in the process of establishing their identity and they truly believe they know better than you. As a result, they are constantly challenging your authority. So, what are going to do when your teenager comes home an hour past curfew? Here are 10 suggestions for creating effective consequences and improving mental health.

1. Consequences Are Not Punishment

Traditionally, it has been popular to give children a punishment for bad behavior. The problem with that approach is that punishment **does not work** in changing undesirable conduct. Consequences are a natural product of our behavior. As a parent, you may need to give a consequence to your adolescent but you should refrain from punishment.

2. Consequences Need To Make Sense

An effective consequence needs to be appropriate to the behavior. For example, if you ground your child for two weeks because they were on their phone after bedtime, that does not make sense. Instead, because their behavior involved their phone, maybe they should write a paper about the negative outcomes of phone use after bedtime. Teenagers are more likely to make the connection between behavior and consequence if it is reasonable.

3. Allow Your Teenager To Have Input Into Their Consequences

You will find that your child will be more receptive to their consequences if they have been able to provide some input into what they might be beforehand. This empowers them and shows that you respect their feedback. Additionally, you might find that they come up with some consequences that are tougher than what you would have given them.

4. Consequences Have To Matter (But Don't Overdo It)

If your child does not care about the consequence, then it won't work. For example, if their consequence is to go to their room for the day—and they like being in their room—then it will not have the intended effect. Make sure their consequence is something they will remember. Having said that, if the consequence is [too harsh](#) it will overshadow the lesson and hurt your parent-child relationship.

4. It is Not Personal

Giving a consequence should be handled like a business transaction. No need to get emotionally involved. They performed a behavior and this is the consequence. Case Closed.

5. Stay Strong

Teenagers will try to wear you down when you give a consequence. If you give in, you teach them that all they have to do is argue a lot and they will get their way. Once you have decided on a consequence, don't change it.

6. Follow Through

Once you give a consequence you must see it through to the end. Having them clean their room for one day when you told them it would be two days will backfire. You will lose credibility and they won't take you seriously.

7. Consider Their Behavior, Not Just Their Words

I love it when a teenager says that they don't care about a consequence. That usually means it is working. Pay attention to how your child acts when he/she receives a consequence rather than what they say. They may say they don't care just to get you to back off.

8. Be Consistent

The same consequence should be given for the same behavior over time. This is how your teenager will learn about the effects of their actions. The consequence should not change just because you have had a shift in your mood.

9. Make Consequences That Last A Specific Time

If you give a consequence that is open-ended—or lasts too long—it will not be [effective](#). Your teenager needs to know when the consequence will end so they will remain motivated to achieve their goal. In addition, if a consequence goes on too long, they will forget about the original behavior that caused the consequence in the first place. A serious infraction deserves a more serious consequence, but keeping their phone for two months does not help anyone involved.

10. Don't Give Up

You may see a change in behavior after giving a consequence one time, but it may take a few times until your teenager makes the connection between a particular behavior and its outcome. It takes time to judge the effectiveness of a consequence. Don't give up on it too soon.

Parenting a teenager is a difficult job. If you are struggling with implementing consequences with your child, please [contact me](#) for a counseling session. I'm here to help.

By MS Broudy