



1 Establish rules and consequences with your teen

Talk to your teen in the lead up to them learning to drive and getting their drivers license. Agree rules and consequences up front, (and even record them for clarity) when everyone is calm. Always uphold the consequences!

2 Avoid punishment

Avoid punishment, where you react from emotion and issue consequences that have not been previously discussed - this makes things worse. The difference between punishment and consequence is if the teen knew this would be the consequence if I do this.

3 Acknowledge the emotional brain

Understand the teen lives more typically in their emotional brain than the parent, so you need to acknowledge their emotions in order to demonstrate that you are indeed listening to them. Kids do as you do, not as you say, so if you want them to listen to your advice, boundaries and logic, then you need to demonstrate good listening by reflecting back their emotions before doing any of that.

4 Choose the right time for conversations

Choose your times well for more difficult conversations. Don't follow your emotions and bring it up when they are not going to be likely to listen anyway - just after an argument; when they first get out of bed; when they are hungry (which may be 95% of the time admittedly!). Instead choose the time of the day they are most likely to be reasonable. This also gives you the chance to gather your own thoughts and be more centred yourself.

5 Drink water

Drinking water requires you to regulate your whole system in order not to drown when you drink it. Use this to calm yourself or your teen down should conversations get tricky.

6 Agree a SAFE WORD

Try having a 'safe' word, that only you and your kids know, that if they use this in text or on the phone with you it means "Help mum/dad and get me out of this situation!". Often our kids feel pressured into doing something they don't really want to do but it is difficult for the teen brain to ignore pressure from their peers. Using the 'safe' word tells you to act as the mean parent who demands they return home or gets picked up immediately. Your kids will be grateful you rescued them and it's one less potentially risky situation your child will face.

7 Get out of jail FREE card

I gave my kids one "get out of jail free" card where I would just rescue them and issue no consequence regardless of how many rules they had broken to get in that situation in the first place! It is often valuable learning for the child without you needing to issue a consequence as the situation was dire enough to ring you! It again can save our kids from making a bad situation much worse.

8 Lead by example

If you have rules for your kids, be sure to have the same rules for yourself when driving. No talking on your mobile phone, checking text messages or speeding when driving. .