

ACTIVE PARENTING 101



Most parents come to a parenting class or read a book about parenting in hopes of finding the magic bullet of discipline. It doesn't exist. There are certainly tricks you can use to modify your adolescent's behavior and bend them to your will but these methods usually fall short in the long run. What works much better is a combination of solid discipline skills, coupled with a strong relationship. A strong relationship increases your ability to influence your teen. Your ideas matter more, your approval or disapproval matters more, your rules matter more, and your discipline matters more.

Build a strong relationship and your adolescent will more likely come around to your way of thinking about most things-not all things because that would be counterproductive. Progress is made when one generation improves upon the previous generation.

NEED A LITTLE HELP?

CARE's Active Parenting classes provide many skills to help build your relationship with your adolescent including mutual respect, problem solving, family enrichment, and encouragement. The most important skill, good communication, helps to build those skills in subtle yet profound ways.

CARE offers parenting classes all year where we support each other as we learn and discuss these as well as many other skills. If you would like to register for a parenting class, please visit www.careofsem.com/classes or you can call **586-541-2273**.

SKILLS

that build a strong and respectful relationship

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active Listening is a way that lets the other person know we really "hear" what they are saying, and we are trying to understand what they are feeling.

- Encourages children to feel heard and to continue talking.
- Releases oxytocin in their brain which aids in feelings of safety, bonding, and love.
- Helps children who are "upset" and have lost perspective to think through their problems.
- It is not repeating the person's words, but rather focuses on their feelings.

How to use Active Listening:

1. Choose an open-ended phrase such as, "You look or sound..."
2. Link the open-ended phrase with what you think the person might be feeling.
3. Add the reason you believe to be causing the person's feeling (it's not necessary to be accurate).

EXAMPLE:

Sounds like...

you're really angry (*feeling*)

because I won't allow you to go to that party. (*reason*)

You're not solving, judging, or blaming.
Just listening.

DISCIPLINE

However, communication is not discipline. It's merely the beginning of the process. Some people think that discipline means punishment. **Discipline and punishment are not the same thing.** Many of us grew up with parents who used rewards and punishment to control our behavior but rewards teach children to get something—not to cooperate. Punishment teaches children to resent and fear us. This can lower self-esteem. It can hurt the relationship and the influence that we want to have.

Discipline is not a single act or statement. It is a process. Both learning to discipline and learning *from* it take time. The goal of discipline is to teach children self-discipline. It is to guide children to be responsible and to cooperate. When children misbehave, we use discipline to help them choose a better way to behave.

One way to do that is to teach responsibility and accountability through choices and consequences. We offer boundaries (rules) and then allow choice within those boundaries that is age appropriate. For example, if an adolescent has a curfew time that they are not adhering to, you can offer a choice within the limit. "Eddie, you can either be home on time tonight and continue to go out with your friends or if you chose to come home late again, I'll know you've chosen not to go out next weekend. You decide." If they chose to come home late again, you don't have to be angry because they've made the choice to be late, "Ok, Eddie, I see that you've chosen not to go out next weekend. We'll try again in two weeks." Meanwhile, his grounding is a good time to problem solve. Of course, as the parent you already know how to solve the problem of them coming home late but it's more empowering if you become the rudder on their boat and help them to solve that problem on their own.

For consequences to be effective they must respect you and your child, fit the misbehavior (not every issue involves their technology), and be reasonable so that they are reliable and offer an opportunity to learn and try again.