

# **COPING WITH TEENAGERS**

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEENAGER**

- 1. Searching for their own identity**
  - Becoming aware of their own personalities
  - Establishing their own values
  - Developing their own interests
- 2. Struggling with a poor self-image**
  - Insecure due to physical and social changes
  - Anxious about coping in an achievement-oriented society
  - A very strong need to be accepted by peers
- 3. Striving for independence**
  - They want to be "different" - do their "own thing"
  - They react strongly against authoritarianism

## **THE PROBLEM**

Parents continue to exercise control the way they have always done

- It is a natural instinct to provide
  - Protection
  - Guidance

OR

- Parents give up and leave the teenager to himself

This is the underlying source of conflict between parents and teenagers

## **A TEENAGER'S REACTION**

- 1. Passive-aggressive behaviour**
  - A release of pent-up anger against parents or other authority figures
  - In many cases it is a subconscious retaliation
    - The purpose is to upset parents
- 2. Examples of passive-aggressive behaviour**
  - Dawdling, procrastination, forgetfulness, untidiness
  - Negativity, boredom, non-participation, critical of others
  - Poor school marks, deliberate disobedience, open rebellion
  - Crime, drugs, sexual promiscuity, and even attempts to commit suicide

## **A PARENTAL STRATEGY**

- 1. Give your teenagers unconditional love**
  - Don't pressurise your teenagers to achieve
  - Accept their friends without condemnation
- 2. Give your teenagers unhurried time**
  - "I don't have the time" = "Other things are more important"
  - Spend time with each one - in "neutral" activities
- 3. Give them "permission without approval"**
  - Moral values cannot be imposed on teenagers
  - Discuss moral issues regularly and openly
    - But leave the choice to them

4. **Protect them against "dangerous" situations**
  - Teenagers are emotionally still too immature to:
    - attend certain parties
    - see certain movies
    - go to certain places
  - Always give full reasons for your restrictions
  - Start off strictly but specify a relaxation timetable
5. **Rules should focus on "consideration of others"**
  - Responsibilities in the home - "own affairs" vs "general affairs"
  - Other family members must be treated with respect
  - Discipline usually involves restrictions or finances
6. **Be hard on standards, but soft on people**
  - Do not tolerate unacceptable behaviour
    - Teenagers should have the right to choose their own lifestyle
    - But they should not have the right to make other people's lives a misery
  - The most effective discipline is for parents to withhold their "service"
7. **Encourage self-control in your teenagers**
  - Give them full responsibility with regard to:
    - Schoolwork
    - Finances
  - Let them "suffer" the consequences of their own decisions
8. **Develop their thought processes**
  - Hold regular discussions on philosophies, world affairs, political/cultural viewpoints, etc.
  - Make God's Word stimulating and relevant
  - Respect their opinions and tastes

#### **PARENTAL EXAMPLE**

1. **Do not overreact emotionally**
  - Teenagers will lose their respect for you
2. **Values are caught, not taught**
  - Teenagers will never accept life values that parents do not practise themselves
3. **Provide emotional security in the home**
  - The greatest strain on a teenager is an unhappy marriage relationship between parents
4. **Walk daily with God**
  - He has promised both strength and wisdom to those who trust in Him  
(Philippians 4:13 and James 1:5)

#### **CONCLUSION**

1. **No parent can win a battle of wills with a teenager**
  - Teenagers have time on their side
2. **Parents must set their teenagers free**
  - Your success as a parent is determined by how well your children can cope with life on their own

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