

The Fear Of Parenting Your Teen

Most parents have felt some kind of fear when it comes to parenting. It is a natural part of being a parent because we care and want to protect our loved ones and those close to us. However, fear can also get in the way of a healthy parenting relationship. Fear cuts you off from your other positive and caring resources that are important in a healthy relationship. As parents you may not be aware of your fear and how that plays out in interactions with your teen.

Common fears are

- Failing grades in school
- Skipping school
- Telephone calls from school
- Attaching to peers that have a negative influence
- Staying out too late
- Drug or alcohol use
- Not knowing where your son or daughter is late at night
- A call from the police
- A call from the hospital
- Not getting to school on time
- Always getting into an argument or conflict

A common approach to handling fear as a parent is to focus on controlling the behaviour in the son or daughter that is causing the fear. However, this usually causes more resentment and anger in the teen which leads to more frustration and fear in parents. If the pattern continues then both teens and the parents begin to behave in destructive and negative ways.

Common Parent Behaviours where Fear is a common underlying factor

- Yelling at teen
- Saying or doing things in the moment that you regret later
- Disconnected from your teen and yourself in the moment
- Walking on ‘eggshells’ in the home
- Distancing from your teen for fear of making a mistake
- Always focusing and lecturing making sure the teen makes the ‘right’ choices
- Buying things or giving money to keep peace
- Bribing in order to get things done or ‘pass’ in school
- Tolerating inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour from teen
- Constantly afraid that your son or daughter just can’t be trusted to make good decisions

- Not being present in the moment with your teen because you focused on something that happened in the past or believe that something terrible will happen in the future

As parents we are not perfect and do make mistakes from time to time when our emotions get the best of us. However, despite your best intentions, when actions and words consistently come from a place of fear teens will usually want to avoid you altogether and behaviours continue to get worse.

What You Can Do

As a parent, take some time to look at yourself, what your fears are, and how you handle your fear. Don't expect to eliminate fear, but be aware of how fear impacts your behaviour especially in relation to your son or daughter. Ask yourself what would be different for you if you could put fear on hold and instead focus on your ability to:

- Be fully present in the moment with all your resourcefulness in the moment
- Concentrate on understanding and being aware of yourself, your teen, and the situation first
- Stay connected to yourself and your teen under difficult situations
- Care for your teen as a person before addressing the behaviour
- Be Calm
- Creatively deal with a situation

Some fears are easier to deal with than others. Some fears can actually be quite old and have been with you before you even became a parent. Feeling isolated and alone with fear usually creates more fear which creates more negative behaviours. Understanding what your fears are and how they impact you is a first step to taking responsibility for your side of the relationship with your teen. It is a healthy place to start a change that can bring you closer with your teen rather than pushing them away. Often teens are more afraid of their parents fear and reaction than they are of the consequences themselves. Working on your side of the pattern can reduce a barrier that is getting in the way of having a more positive relationship with your teen that leads to better behaviour for everyone.