



TGWAC:(Teenage Guide with Aunty Comfort)

RAISING A GODLY GENERATION

Hey! Teen aging is happening to my Child, What Should I Do?

By Aunty Comfort

Teenage years can be both fascinating and challenging for both parents and the teenagers. Let me break down what you as a parent can do when children enter this fascinating and sometimes turbulent phase of life, using the word 'TEENAGE' as a guide:

T - Talk and Truly Listen: Quality of communication shifts dramatically during adolescence. Gone are the days of simple, direct answers. Now, you need to create a safe space for your teen to express their evolving thoughts and feelings, even if they seem contradictory or confusing. Truly listen means putting aside your own agenda, making eye contact (when appropriate), and validating their emotions, even if you don't agree with their perspective. Ask open-ended questions that encourage more than a yes or no response. For instance, instead of "Did you have a good day?", try "What was the most interesting thing that happened today?"

In a recent interaction I had with teenagers and parents, while parents claimed they often have quality communication with their teenagers, the teenagers said otherwise. Dear parents, you must talk and truly listen to them.

E - Empathize with Their World: Remember what it was like to be a teenager? The intense friendships, the pressure to fit in, the exploration of identity, the feeling that no one understands you? While the specifics might be different today, the underlying emotions are often the same. Try to see the world through their eyes. Understand the significance of social media in their lives, the importance of their peer group, and the anxieties they face about the future. Showing empathy doesn't mean condoning everything, but it does build connection and trust. Dear parents, it's tougher to be a teenager these days than it was when you were a teenager, empathize with them.

E - Establish Clear Boundaries and Expectations: While teenagers crave independence, they also need structure and security. Clear, consistent boundaries provide that framework. Discuss rules and expectations openly, explaining the reasoning behind them. This could involve curfews, screen time limits, responsibilities around the house, and academic expectations. When boundaries are crossed, follow through with agreed-upon consequences calmly and consistently. This teaches responsibility and helps them understand the limits of the world. Dear parents, the most important step here is to do it together, talk the rules together and jointly attach the consequences for obeying or disobeying the rules.

N - Nurture Their Individuality: Adolescence is a time of self-discovery. Your teen is figuring out who they are, what they like, and what they believe in. Encourage them to

explore their interests, whether it's music, sports, art, debate, or something entirely new, even if it is TikToking. Support their passions and celebrate their unique talents. Resist the urge to compare them to siblings or other teenagers. Allow them the space to develop their own identity, even if it differs from your own expectations. Importantly, be there to provide guidance so that while discovering themselves, they don't follow bad role models.

A - Adapt Your Parenting Style: The parenting strategies that worked during childhood will likely need adjustments during the teenage years. You'll need to shift from being the primary director to more of a guide and a mentor. This means gradually giving them more autonomy and responsibility as they demonstrate maturity. Be flexible and willing to adapt your approach as they grow and change. Recognize that what works one day might not work the next. Just allow yourself some allowance and try to have fun when engaging your teenagers.

G - Guide, Don't Control: Your role as a parent is shifting from manager to mentor. Instead of trying to control their every move, focus on guiding them towards making responsible decisions. Ask them questions to help them think through the consequences of their actions. Share your wisdom and experiences, but ultimately allow them to learn from their own mistakes (within safe limits). Empower them to take ownership of their choices. They will most likely spend the greater part of their time away from you, the more you empower them to take ownership of their choices, the better they are able to behave well in your absence.

E - Early Salvation is Early Preservation: If you haven't been able to pass on your faith to your child before they become teenagers, it's still not late. Draw them closer and ensure you deliberately allow them learn the way of God through your life. What you tell your teenager to do is as important as how they see you do it. Model godliness, model decency, model the type of Christian you want them to be. You are the 'Jesus' they see. Don't let your teenager hate Jesus or hate religion because of you. The earlier they embrace Jesus; the better control they will have over the excessive naughtiness of teenage-hood. I dare say that, navigating the teenage years can be challenging, but it's also an incredibly rewarding time to witness your child's growth and development. By embracing these principles, you can build a stronger, more supportive relationship with your teenager and help them navigate this pivotal stage of their lives. Remember, patience, understanding, and a good dose of humor can go a long way!

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