

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Taming teenage tantrums

It's important to understand that teenagers have outgrown their brains and they have faulty judgement. With hormones raging and physical changes they battle being in charge of their bodies as well as their brains.



Imagine you are a single mother of a 15 year old boy and you don't want him to go to a Saturday night party.

He puffs his chest, curls his lip and barks:

"You're kidding. You can't make me stay home tonight. NO Way!"

What do you do?

Treat him as if you have taken delivery of a parcel with **Handle with extreme care!** printed on it. Stand back and approach the parcel slowly and deliberately knowing there is probably something fragile inside.

It's important to understand that teenagers have outgrown their brains and they have faulty judgement. With hormones raging and physical changes they battle being in charge of their bodies as well as their brains.

This doesn't excuse poor or uncooperative behaviour but it helps to remember that though most young people can look adult-like they are actually a long way from being there. Understanding this makes them less scary and their behaviour less hurtful.

Robotic Disengagement

Stay calm when kids taunt or even issue threats and refuse to be drawn into a game of their making.

Use robotic-like disengagement when faced with an angry, upset or tantrum-throwing teenager. Remain removed and dispassionate no matter how much a teenager acts up.

Act like the confident parent, even though you may be quivering inside. And be brief with any instructions - say what you need to say and then keep quiet.

When things have calmed down give him a reason not to be bad. Let him experience something less than pleasant if he chooses to go against your good sense. Perhaps, he can prepare his own meals if he chooses to operate outside your guidelines.

Robotic disengagement sounds easy but it needs practice.

Follow the rules of robotic disengagement:

1. Refuse to respond to verbal taunts or challenges.
2. Stay calm, even aloof. Stand your ground and act as if this behaviour is not new to you.
3. Be prepared to move away from a teenager who is out of control.
4. Some time after an outburst sit down with him and give him some reasons why he should be cooperative and some reasons why he shouldn't be uncooperative- even just for next time.

Robotic disengagement requires that you have a good one-on-one relationship with your young person.

A relationship establishes goodwill and gives you LEVERAGE when you want cooperation.

Such relationships take time and effort – perhaps a shopping trip, watch some sport, driving to where they want to go or just hang out together.

The pay-off is huge in terms of being able to influence your young person and help them make better choices, even if they are just agreeing to the choices that you make.

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