

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

11 going on 25 . . .

The old, overprotective dad needs to go, allowing a new dad to emerge that accepts that his little girl is growing.

"Got any kids?" I said to the taxi-driver to break an awkward silence recently.

"Yep, I got one daughter. She's 11 going on 25."

Knowing there was a story here I dug a little deeper.

"Getting a little difficult to handle, is she?"

A simple question or two was all it took for this guy to give me the lowdown on his early teen daughter.

The cabbie was a single dad whose eleven year old only daughter stayed with him two days a week.

"It used to be easy, mate! We'd have a ball when she'd come and stay with me. She was my best mate. Now, she doesn't want to know me! Last week I asked her to clean the table up after tea and she accused me of treating her like a slave. She went to her room, slammed the door and didn't come out till breakfast"

"Been there done that with two of my own daughters," I said.

"You've done it TWICE, mate???"

"Yep, certainly have," I replied with that smugness that comes with knowing that the other person only really knows the half of it.

He then told me something he said to his daughter that made me think what planet are you on? . . . but more about that soon.

I told the driver that my experience in the parenting area was professional as well as personal. He began to quiz me for hints.

I reassured him that he was not the first and wouldn't be the last person who was flummoxed by the behaviour, language and moodiness of early teenage girls.

His lack of knowledge and experience about teenagers was causing him plenty of stress and anxiety. He was getting worked up about something that fits within the normal spectrum of behaviours for this age group.

He then told me how his daughter threw a full-on tantrum when he asked her if she was "putting tissues down her bra to make her boobs look bigger". D'OH!!

I suggested that he may have to speak to her with a little more tact in the future. In fact, my advice was to start speaking to his daughter as if he was going for a job interview – i.e. **be friendly, agree with much of what she says and think before you speak.**



Teen girls often reject their dads

It's hard being a dad with teenage daughters – particularly in early to middle teens. They can suddenly change and **leave their dads out of the loop**, particularly if they treat them like little girls. Their heightened verbal skills can leave many a tongue-tied, well-meaning dad wondering whatever happened to his little angel.

Teenage girls often reject their dads, which is hurtful. The old, overprotective dad needs to go, allowing a new dad to emerge that accepts that his little girl is growing up. There is a certain amount of sadness, but that is part of the parenting deal.

My parting words to the put-your-foot-in-it-but-good-hearted taxi driver?

"Choose your words wisely when you speak with your daughter, my friend . . . and as much as you can . . . let her know she looks FANTASTIC." Girls love their dad's seal of approval BUT they won't let a bloke know it's important.

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