



# Decoding Teen Behavior

*10 Annoying Habits and How To Handle Them*

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## **Decoding Teen Behavior: 10 Annoying Habits and How to Handle Them**

*There is no doubt about it: teen behavior can be puzzling. Your teen may be loving and mature one minute, and irrational and spiteful the next. Hormones, as well as the need to integrate innumerable parental, peer, and cultural messages make the teenage years challenging for those going through them. This phase is a normal part of human development, so, to a certain degree you need to learn to live with it. But, there are things you can do to manage specific aspects of teen behavior:*

### **1. Mood Swings**

Due to biology, the teen brain is prone to strong emotions, but does not yet have the capacity to control them. Biology further puts stress on the teen brain with intense hormonal changes and physical growth, both of which may lead to general discomfort. These factors combine with a lack of experience in dealing with life's ups and downs to cause teens to experience more mood swings than are typical at other stages of life.

While mood swings can be challenging to witness, realize that your teen has a lot to deal with, both physically and emotionally.

**Suggest that your teenager:**

- Talk about mood swings with others in the same age group
- Take a step back and try to evaluate troubling situations objectively
- Exercise, eat right, and get enough sleep
- Use a creative outlet, such as painting, writing, dancing, or working on cars
- Recognize the mood will pass

### **2. Anger**

As with adults, there are a lot of things in the world that can trigger teenage anger: misplaced items, lost competitions, failed romances, unfair rules, perceived injustices. What makes teenage anger different is that teens have less control over their emotions than adults, and have less practice dealing with a variety of life situations.

The key to managing teenage anger is to let your teen know it's okay to be angry, but there are certain ways of expressing it that are NOT okay. Violence, disrespect, and destruction are all unacceptable, while saying, "I feel angry at \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_" can be a constructive way to start a conversation to work through the issue. Advise your teen to think before expressing anger, and to work toward solutions, such as taking a walk around the block to cool off, rather than holding onto negative emotions.

### **3. *Eye Rolling***

Remember, your teen is in the process of carving out an identity. Part of that process involves separating from you by finding areas of difference. Don't worry, your teen will come around and see eye-to-eye with you on many things later on. But, for now, there is a need to differentiate, and you may see an extreme effort to find things to disagree with you about. The eye roll is your teen's way of saying all this, without necessarily even knowing it.

Try not to let the eye roll get to you. Either ignore it, or make light of it, perhaps by asking your teen to run through it again—this time in slow motion.

### **4. *Boredom***

There are a variety of reasons teens become bored: they are limited in what they can do by lack of money, an inability to drive, and restrictions on their activities. Teens in smaller towns may have a limited number of appropriate activities available to them. The teen brain may also have a particular need for stimulation.

**You can help them overcome boredom by suggesting these teenage boredom busters:**

- Start a hobby
- Volunteer
- Get a job
- Engage in a creative activity
- Exercise
- Watch a movie
- Explore music

### **5. *Your Teen Seems to Hate You***

As hard as it can be for parents sometimes, the teen years are about letting go—letting your child become an independent adult. Sometimes it can be hard for a teen to know just how to do this, and it comes out in unpleasant ways.

As with many things concerning parenting teenagers, it is important to set appropriate boundaries. You may want to tell your teen it is OK to think they hate you, but it is not OK to say it. Or, you may want to let them know that no matter how much they hate you, you will always love them. One thing to avoid doing is allowing your teen to manipulate you with their words. For example, in response to "I hate you," you could say, "That may be, but I'm still not letting you borrow the car."

## **6. *Defiance***

Teen defiance can take many forms, including ignoring your rules, sassiness, disrespect, sarcasm, refusal to help around the house, and arguments. Once again, your teen is attempting to establish an individual identity, and defiance is one way to do it.

Some strategies for dealing with defiance include choosing which behaviors you will address, setting appropriate boundaries, and then following through. It is particularly important to do what you say you will do; otherwise, your teen will see it is possible to get away with even more. Seek to understand your teen—maybe there is something going on at school to cause acting out—and be sure to offer praise for good behavior.

## **7. *Withdrawal From Family***

Some level of withdrawal from family is normal for teens. It's another way of establishing a unique identity.

Let your teen know what you expect in terms of spending time with family. It's OK to require a certain level of involvement. When participation is not mandatory, try saying something like, "This is not one of those times when I'll insist that you join in, but we'd love to have you along."

## **8. *Shocking Appearance***

Adolescence is a time for experimenting—with roles, behaviors, problem-solving skills, romance, and, yes, appearance.

Try not to judge your teen too harshly. Check out fashions online to find out if what they're wearing really IS the latest style. Talk to other parents to see what they allow. But, don't be afraid to draw the line if you're concerned about what your teen's clothes might represent, or if they clash with your values. For example, some clothing might be associated with a gang affiliation, or be more revealing than you prefer.

## **9. *Experimentation With Drugs and Alcohol***

It is almost inevitable that your teen will encounter drugs and alcohol at some point. How teens respond to that encounter will depend on many things, including their susceptibility to peer pressure, their emotional stability, the quality of their home and school life, and, especially, the messages they've received from their role models, including you.

The best approach is to address the issue before it becomes an issue. That is, have a talk with your teen about your views on drug and alcohol use, the dangers of using drugs and alcohol, and what you expect your teenager to do when faced with the choice to experiment with drugs and alcohol. You may want to share experiences (if any) you had with drugs and alcohol as a teen.

If you suspect your teen is already using drugs, again, the direct approach is best. Gear your conversation toward wanting to help and offer guidance, not toward confrontation and punishment. Get more information about how often and why your teenager is using substances. If necessary, contact a professional for help.

## **10. Privacy**

Just as teens need to establish psychological distance between themselves and their parents, they also need to establish physical distance. They do this by spending more time on their own. This is typically normal.

When it comes to teenagers and privacy, strive to balance your teen's need for privacy with your responsibility to keep them safe (an important aspect of parenting teenagers). Remember that teens are in the process of becoming adults and, as such, have a need to think and plan about their identities and their futures. Allow them their space, and focus on how to spend the extra time on your hands.

## **Conclusion**

*Parenting teenagers can be both rewarding and challenging, often more challenging when you are trying to understand teen behavior: What's normal? What's not? Keep in mind that teens are at a unique stage of life, reaching for adulthood, and hoping you will support them along the way.*

*For more information about parenting teenagers, be sure to check out [IHaveaTeenager.com](http://IHaveaTeenager.com), where you'll find advice, tips, information, expert advice, and—most importantly—the sense that you are not alone.*

## **Sources Used for This E-book:**

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