

# Top 8 Parental Button Pushing Techniques

- 1. Preaching or Using Clichés** As soon as adolescents hear lectures coming with clichés like “When I was your age,” they instantly go deaf. Adolescents do not want to hear how bad they are or how good another family member is by comparison. They will usually get angry, walk away or ignore the parent. In turn, the parents get angry and the argument escalates.
- 2. Talking in Chapters** Adolescents may ask a short question but not receive as short an answer from the parents. For example, instead of simply saying, “take out the garbage,” parents often talk in chapters and state: “I have told you for weeks and weeks to take the garbage out. How many times do we have to go through this? I am sick and tired...” When this happens, there is a greater chance that the adolescent will become angry as he may feel personally attacked because the long speech contains many negative elements.
- 3. Labeling** Adolescents hate when parents say they are “always” this way or that way. This can be especially dangerous because adolescents will eventually live up to these labels as they become a permanent self-fulfilling prophecy.
- 4. Futurizing** This happens when parents talk about their teenagers’ future within a negative framework. These are statements like: “You’ll never get into college”, “No one will hire you” or “You’ll never get a date for prom with that attitude”. Futurizing often results in the teenager shutting the parents out, hurt feelings, resentment, and anger.
- 5. Instant Problem-Solving** Adolescents do not want instant understanding and problem-solving when they come to their parents with a problem. When troubled by conflicts, teenagers feel different from everyone else and their emotions are new, personal and unique. Parents mean well by saying they understand just how the teenager feels and offering instant solutions, but the teenager just needs to feel that he or she was listened to.
- 6. Questioning the Teenager's Restlessness and Discontent** Developmentally, this is a time of uncertainty, self-consciousness, moodiness and suffering. These feelings usually pass over time. However, until they do pass, parents only aggravate the situation when they ask questions such as, “What is the matter with you?” and “What has suddenly gotten into you?” These are unanswerable questions for a restless and discontented teenager. Even if the teenager did know what the problem was, they could not say, “Look, mom or dad, I am torn by conflicting emotions, engulfed by irrational urges and confused by raging hormones.” The parents should accept the behavior in the most supportive but in-obtrusive way possible.
- 7. Not Tolerating Experimental Behavior** Parents can be shown how to tolerate certain behaviors without accepting them. Changes in clothing and hairstyle are symbolic of the teenager trying to find an identity. If the parents constantly focus on these changes rather than simply expressing their disapproval once and letting it work itself out, the teenager might rebel further causing a power struggle between parents and teenager to ensue. Counselors should encourage parents to save their energy for bigger issues such as drugs, alcohol, skipping school, curfew, etc.
- 8. Throwing our Criticisms** Insults and criticism cut deeper when they come from parents. They damage the inner spirit of the teenager and, unlike physical bruises, often take years to heal. When parents push this type of button by focusing on unpleasant facts about the adolescent’s behavior again and again or by pointing out defects, no one benefits.

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