



# Empowering your teen

Learn how to empower your teen and give them a sense of control



Everyone wants to feel in control. Learn how to empower your teen and give them a sense of control. Listen to Dr Justin Coulson, parenting educator discuss how to provide choice and autonomy to your teen.

[Music]

Justin: We've got this basic psychological need all of us, and especially our teenagers, to be the masters of our destiny. We want to control our lives and usually, the easiest way for a teenager to form their own identity, and prove that they're separate to others, is actually to rebel. To push against. To say "no" and to say, you know "I'm in charge of my own destiny".

The main thing that will create tension between a parent and a teenager is when the parent overrides the teenager's sense of autonomy or choice. And so when an adult in the life of a teenager becomes too controlling, that teenager really pushes hard against the parent.

So what do we do? How do we move forward? What's the best decision from here? Well, we empower them. We essentially say you get where I'm coming from and I'm hearing you. I get how hard this is for you. By giving them their autonomy, they actually tend to make better decisions. Whereas when we're trying to force them and control them, they usually lash out and make less wise decisions.

The idea here though, really, is that we don't just let them do whatever they want. We engage with them in conversations. And I know some teenagers don't like getting into conversations with us because they feel like

we're going to force them. So the best thing to do is actually to listen to them rather than lecture them. We might say to them "What's going on? It's so hard for you. You're hating maths or you're so sick of school" and we kind of just spent some time trying to put ourselves in their situation; to stand in their shoes.

It's critical for parents to learn effective strategies to communicate with their teenagers in a way that doesn't make them feel like they're being controlled and hemmed in. But instead makes them feel like they've got a sense of autonomy; a sense of volition and personal control over their lives. When they feel that, they don't feel like they've got a push back against us.

[Music]

VO: You can discover more on the Spark Their Future website.

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