

Personal and Interpersonal Development for Teenagers

By [Mina Togonon](#)

Having a teenage child can be very difficult, for both parents and the child. It is at this stage when they are very vulnerable and susceptible to the changes that are happening within them and around them. They have to contend with a lot of pressure academically and their budding social life can be equally stressful. They are exposed to drugs and alcohol, and sex and violence are becoming prevalent in the lives of young adults. This is why it is important for them to develop their personal and interpersonal skills.

For parents, this can be a very tricky situation. Most times we do more harm than good when trying to help them with their personal and interpersonal development. Follow these tips to guide you on not only helping your teenagers with their personal and interpersonal development but also in having a more solid relationship with your teenagers. Start treating them like adults. Avoid talking down to them even when you are reprimanding them for something wrong that they did. Do not embarrass them in front of others. If you have to do some serious scolding, do it in private.

When making rules, be clear and concise. In most cases it is not the rules themselves that cause teenagers rebel and lose their way, but the ambiguity of rules we sometimes impose on them. For example, avoid saying "Come home early", but rather say, "You have to be home by 7 pm". In fact it might also be good to spell out the consequences of not obeying the rules but in doing so also be clear and precise e.g. "If you come home later than 7 pm, you will not be allowed to go to your party on Saturday." Never make rules that are impossible to impose. For instance, you cannot keep your teenager from making certain kinds of friends. There is very little you can do about it, and forbidding them without having the power to do anything about it will only make you lose credibility.

There is no need to make rules that are based on the final "Because I said so." Remember, they are no longer little children that you can ask them to do this and that. Consider that your teen daughter or son may not take kindly to arbitrary rules. Take the time explain to them the reason behind the rules you want followed before imposing them. Give them some freedom but include responsibilities. Help them understand the responsibilities associated with such behavior. This is the way you can help them enhance their personal and interpersonal development. It means that giving them some freedom shows trust and most times teenager's respond positively to a show of trust on the part of their parents. However, with every act they made, make them understand the responsibilities associated with freewill. For instance, if you allow use of the car, require that they pay for their own gas and that they check the oil, water and tire pressure before they roar off down the drive. Clearly state the sanctions if the car does not come back in one piece.

Keep an open line of communication. Most parents agree that this is easier said than done. The hugs and kisses relationship you had when they were children are long gone. When they are teenagers, children are trying to assert their personalities as adults and they even pretend in public that they have no parents. Do not get offended by this, it is normal for children to distance them at this stage. Accept that they will begin to keep secrets and that there are things they will tell other people but not you. Give them some space but make it clear to them that you are always available if and when they need you. And if they do talk to you, keep an open mind to what they are saying and keep any reservations you make have to yourself. Teenagers can be very difficult. But in most cases, it is because we rarely listen to them and even rarely try to look at things from their point of view. How we relate to them has a great impact on how they will develop as adults. And what they become as adults is surely a reflection on how we are as parents.