

## **10 Parenting Pitfalls**

### **Pitfall: Abandoning your role as parent to become a friend**

Some parents are too concerned about their child “liking” them. Children learn trust and respect when you provide structure, guidance and accountability. If you are invested in merely being their friend, you rob them of the opportunity to develop self esteem.

**Positive:** Be the parent. Setting and enforcing appropriate rules assures your child that you love them enough to endure their anger. Learn to be OK with the fact your child may be angry at you at times.

### **Pitfall: Over protecting your child**

No one wants their child to feel sadness, failure or pain. While this is understandable, the problem is that experiencing these things is a necessary part of maturing. Your child needs to know sadness in order to understand joy, failure to know success and pain to know happiness.

**Positive:** Allow your child to make choices that may not have the best outcome and experience the consequences or rewards of their choice. Your role is to be empathetically supportive when they fail and share in their happiness when they're successful.

### **Pitfall: Undermining your parental authority**

Statements like “Wait until your dad (or mom) comes home” tells your child that you are not able to manage the situation. You give your authority to someone else.

**Positive:** If you need to discuss the situation with your spouse, first let your child know that their behavior is not OK with you. Then tell them you need a short time to consider the circumstances and will be dealing with them shortly.

### **Pitfall: Parental Opposition**

The most successful parenting happens when both parents present a united front. This does not mean you always agree on everything. It does mean that you make decisions together and then support each other. Don't undermine the other parent's authority. This reduces the opportunity for parental manipulation.

**Positive:** Work together and be supportive of the other parent. Let your teen know that decisions are made together and you are both in agreement.

### **Pitfall: Power struggles**

When you're in a discussion with your child, listen to their side as well as state your point. But don't argue. An argument translate to a winner and a loser. You are then in the position of defending your point and engaged in a power struggle.

**Positive:** If a discussion with your child becomes heated, tell them you need a minute to think and walk away. Come back when you are calm.

**At Risk Alternatives, L.L.C.**

Finding Options Supporting Success

Linda D Cain, M.S.Ed PO Box 660 Boulder, CO 80306

[www.atriskalternatives.com](http://www.atriskalternatives.com) 720-299-8844 LindaDCain@yahoo.com

Pitfall: Lack of consistency

Consistency lets your child know what is expected of them and how they should behave accordingly. When you set consequences for unacceptable behavior, follow through. Your child can be a master manipulator or negotiator; don't give them the opportunity to do that.

Positive: Be consistent. Say what you mean and follow through.

Pitfall: Underestimating Technology

There is a lot of technological today that kids embrace and many parents don't understand. The internet, cell phone, text messaging and instant messaging all give children the opportunity to explore people and information instantly with very little supervision. The dangers associated with this freedom are many, from pornography to predators.

Positive: Proactively monitor your child's technology.

Make sure you child knows your expectations around the technology they use.

Pitfall: Minimizing your teen's behavior

"Boys will be boys." "She'll outgrow it" "I smoked pot and I'm successful." The world is a different place today; illegal drugs are much more powerful than ones 20 years ago, 30% of kids say they have experienced bullying and pressure to succeed is stronger than ever.

Positive: Be realistic about your teens behavior and act accordingly.

Parenting Pitfall: Being Unprepared

Your child gets an F on a midterm report card. The coach calls to inform you that your child quit their athletic team. Your child comes home with an alcohol ticket. You decide your child needs help immediately; but what kind?

Positive: Research possible resources as soon as you see your child struggling. Your child may not ultimately need any additional help, but the truth is most kids need a little extra support every once in a while.

Pitfall: A New School Year or Semester Will Fix It

Hoping a new school year will suddenly transform your child into a different student than last year is unrealistic. If your teen has learning, emotional, or behavioral issues that are the cause of their academic struggles, simply experiencing a fresh start will not result in significant change.

Positive: Address your child's problems with active solutions to give them the best chance of success.

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