

How to Get Your Parents off Your Back!

— Todd Cartmell, Psy.D.

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BET YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D READ AN ARTICLE LIKE THIS! And no, this is not a trick. I've talked to lots of teenagers who complained that their parents were always nagging them, checking up on them, and acting like they didn't trust them. I am also happy to report that for many of these teens, they were able to do some things that made big changes in the way their parents treated them.

So, yes, there is hope. However, I'll be straight with you. If you want big changes, you have to be willing to make some changes yourself. That is simply how it works in the grown-up world you are entering.

With that in mind, let me tell you exactly how to get your parents off your back:

1) Express yourself respectfully.

If you are a teenager, I am sure you have some good ideas rolling around in your brain. Believe it or not, your parents actually do want to hear your ideas. They just don't really want to have those ideas screamed at them, or to be talked to rudely or sarcastically. So, if you want your parents to listen to your ideas, make an effort to communicate them in a respectful way.

2) Get things done.

You don't earn a lot of points by neglecting your responsibilities and then complaining when someone talks to you about it. If you act like that at your first real job, you won't have that job for very long. So if you want to be treated like an older kid (instead of a younger kid), then act like one. Get your homework done on time. Study for tests. Do your chores without complaining. Just so you know: Lots of kids do this and they get lots of trust and privileges. It is really not rocket science.

3) Be open to feedback.

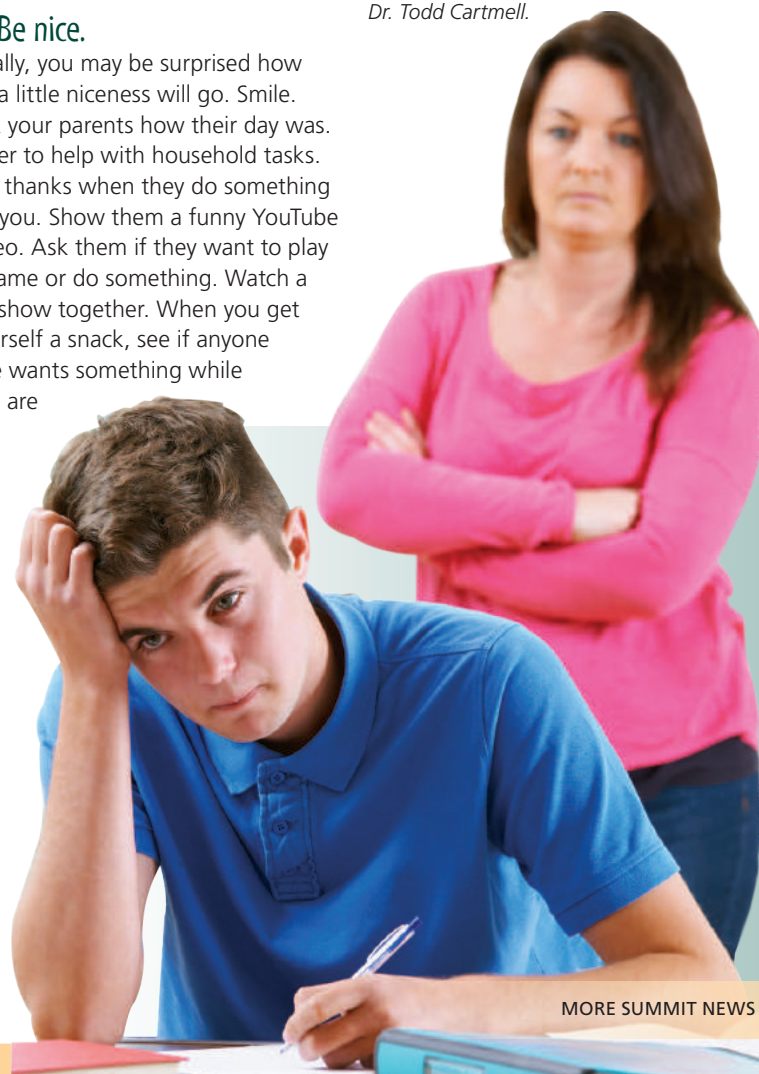
This one gets you major bonus points. It is never fun when your parents point out something that you forgot to do or want to talk to you about something that you did wrong. Don't focus on whether you like the conversation or not. Instead, ask yourself one simple question: Is it true? If it is, then be open to the feedback from your parents and correct the mistake. Apologize if needed, and you can even shock them half to death by thanking them for reminding you about the issue. If you think the feedback is mistaken, then respectfully ask about it.

4) Be nice.

Finally, you may be surprised how far a little niceness will go. Smile. Ask your parents how their day was. Offer to help with household tasks. Say thanks when they do something for you. Show them a funny YouTube video. Ask them if they want to play a game or do something. Watch a TV show together. When you get yourself a snack, see if anyone else wants something while you are up.

When you do these four things on a regular basis, a magical change begins to happen in your family. Actually, it is not magical at all. You are simply acting like a smart and respectful teenager. And if you are like any of the hundreds of teens I have talked to, you will find that your parents will no longer be on your back. They will happily be right by your side. ■

Todd Cartmell, Psy.D., is a child/adolescent psychologist and author of 8 Simple Tools for Raising Great Kids. For information about workshops, parenting advice, and parenting videos, follow him on Facebook and YouTube at Dr. Todd Cartmell.



Q&A

Q I am a high school junior. I take several medications for my depression, and I also smoke pot most days. Since THC is now being prescribed for many things, what is the problem with smoking it with my meds? I find it is very relaxing.

A Ah, this is an important question! At this time, there is still much we don't know about marijuana use and the way it interacts with medication. Since marijuana has been illegal for years, there is little long-term, large-scale research that has been done to determine long-term safety. That said, what we do know from research that has been done is that heavy marijuana users under twenty-five are up to twelve times as likely to develop psychosis as people in that age group that do not use marijuana. ("Heavy" marijuana use is defined as smoking every day or nearly every day.) In addition, there are studies that show that smoking THC increases risk of lung cancer fifty per cent more than regular cigarettes, and also can increase risk of other oral cancers. So this is why your doctor or nurse practitioner may not be excited about mixing medications with THC. ■

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Have You Been a Victim of Cyberbullying?

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE found yourself in situations where things started happening that you weren't comfortable with, watching someone be made fun of on social media or you, yourself, getting targeted? But you have remained silent because you didn't think there was anything you could do, you didn't seem to have a choice.

According to StopBullying.gov: "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology which includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.



Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking

sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles."

Bullying is done with a goal to hurt, harm, or humiliate. With bullying, there is often a power imbalance between those involved, with power defined as elevated social status, being physically larger, or as being part of a group against an individual. Students who bully perceive their target as vulnerable in some way and often find satisfaction in harming them.

- Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the bullies.
- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience.

It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.

- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

DO'S AND DON'T'S:

We want to encourage you to speak to a trusted adult if you are cyberbullied. You can report it to your parents, a good adult friend, or neighbor. At school, talk to a teacher, school counselor, dean, or principle. *You are not alone!*

Don't ever share your personal information online. Don't 'chat' or friend someone that you don't know, even if that individual claims to be a peer. ■

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How to Beat Back Stress

BETWEEN SCHOOL, HOMEWORK, sports, and social activities, as a teenager, you are bombarded with stressors on a daily basis. Learning how to deal with stress in a healthy way can help you feel better about yourself and about life in general. Here are some quick tips for managing stress.

- 1. Take care of yourself.** Try to eat a balanced nutritious diet, with a variety of fruits and vegetables. Get enough sleep regularly. Allow downtime for yourself. The better you feel overall, the easier it is to handle things when you are stressed.
- 2. Visualize.** If you know you will be facing a stressful situation like taking an exam, try to picture yourself dealing with it in a confident and successful manner.

This is similar to when the coach tells you to picture going out and winning the game, as part of the preparation for the game. Too often, people fall into the habit of envisioning the worst case scenario with the idea that it helps them be prepared for anything. This is not true! Envisioning the worst case scenario simply causes more stress and anxiety. If you have studied for the exam, the best thing you can do is to go into it with the idea that you will do well. This way, your energy can be focused on the exam, not on your anxiety.

- 3. Take a break.** When you find that you are becoming stressed, listen to your body. If you see that your muscles are tense or your stomach is in knots, disengage for

a bit. Watch TV, go for a walk, play with your dog, or talk to a friend. You can count or do some deep breathing to help distract yourself.

- 4. Look at the big picture.** Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in worrying about the small stuff. For example, if you give a speech and stumble on one or two words but otherwise do well, try to focus on the overall speech.

Stress is everywhere. The best lesson you can learn as a teen is how to adapt and how to care for yourself. Self-care is not being selfish; it is a necessity for successful living. ■

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