

CHEAT SHEET FOR PARENTS

OF SMART KIDS AND/OR TEENAGERS

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Parents of bright children (especially when they become teenagers) need to “up” their level of management (e.g., “parenting”) skills. The truth is, only smart adults can put these skills into practice effectively...so this is a test, parents! If you don’t believe you can practice these new skills and employ them without sarcasm, they will backfire on you, so don’t try!

Skill #1: “The Process Comment”

The child does something you have feelings about, or that you don’t like. You DO NOT judge it, you simply repeat out loud what they have done that you can’t believe: e.g., “You didn’t like the cast on your broken foot so you tore it off before your doctor’s visit.” Or: “You drank at the party, so you chose to not come home... and you were too drunk to call...”

You then say what is the most difficult to say: “While I don’t like your choice of action, I understand that you believed it was the right thing to do for you....”

Then, you leave the room or leave them alone with the comment (with none of the proverbial parental moralizing).

Skill#2: “Reverse Psychology”

(Also known as: “Paradoxing” or “Stating the Obvious”)

Similar to making the process comment, but usually used afterwards, you state the obvious and then you (non-sarcastically) state that you are sure they will continue to do what they are doing, that they won’t think deeper or differently about what they are doing/or have done, and that that behavior is what works for them (implying that you fully understand their decisions/behaviors without expecting them to change).

Examples:

“You have gone to school without any breakfast for the past week, so I am sure that you are not going to start eating something like eggs or a protein shake now...your brain seems to function just fine without fuel...”

"I wouldn't expect you to tell me that you forgot to give the school the check/the homework/the permission slip. That would not be in your best interest. You would just have to incur my wrath, so of course you would avoid it. The fact that there are other negative consequences for you is nothing you want to worry about now! I'm sure you'll worry about that later..."

"I'm sure you will continue to date John/Courtney because he/she is so hot. Just because he/she doesn't call you or show up on time (or ditched you for your best friend), you wouldn't change your mind about him/her...in fact, he/she can probably treat you twice as bad and you'll keep going out with him/her. I understand your priorities are a lot different than mine would be..." DON'T SEE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MORALIZE.

The truth is that by this time, your lesson-giving is over and they have to make their own mistakes. THEY WANT TO BE HEARD, ACCEPTED AND UNDERSTOOD. Once you accomplish this, they will share more with you...then, if you did a good job in the beginning, they will come to it themselves. They have to make their own mistakes, of course. You can be a resource for them once they admit it. They won't admit the mistake if they feel judged by you. Acceptance is everything! (Which doesn't mean that you let them destroy themselves). Using a third party, a counselor, can always be a big help if you think the problem is too big!



The Perfect Paradox