

**PREVENTING War at  
HOME:  
5 STRATEGIES FOR  
DISCIPLINING TEENS**



Suzanne Sanchez Counseling  
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## **1. WAIT TO GIVE CONSEQUENCES UNTIL YOU ARE ABLE TO BE RATIONAL AND CALM.**

Don't let your anger make decisions for you. In the moment, you are likely to give consequences which are unfair and punitive. Such consequences can cause your child to feel fear, ashamed, and unloved. Feeling angry is an appropriate response, but managing the anger is important in order to make logical decisions.

### **QUESTIONS TO ANSWER TO HELP MANAGE FRUSTRATION AND BRING CLARITY:**

- What other feelings besides anger are you experiencing?
- What damage was caused as a result of their behavior? (Did they hurt someone's feelings? Did they harm their future opportunities? Did they cause you to decrease trust in them?)
- What do you want your teen to learn from this experience? Why is what they did not okay?



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## **2. MAKE SURE THE CONSEQUENCE FITS THE CRIME.**

Often parents will use the same consequences (e.g. grounding, losing privileges, etc.) over and over for all problems and only change the length of the consequence. As a result, the teen eventually becomes oppositional because they clearly see how their action does not warrant the consequence. They lose trust, they feel disrespected, and they develop anxiety around your relationship.

**EXAMPLE: YOUR TEEN SKIPS FIRST PERIOD OF SCHOOL FOR A WEEK.**

**Not Fitting:** You take all of your teens electronics away.

**Fitting:** Every hour of school missed is an hour of time spent doing schoolwork/homework instead of other activities.



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### **3. MAKE SURE THE CONSEQUENCE IS ENFORCEABLE.**

When you are considering options, you must be able to supervise and enforce the consequence. Expecting your teen to supervise their own consequence is not realistic as they are naturally impulsive and naturally have poor judgment. If you can't realistically supervise the consequence, your teen will feel confused because you are sending a mixed message: "I am you giving you more responsibility even though you have proven to be irresponsible."

**Example: You want your teen to come straight home after school and stay in all weekend.**

**Not Enforceable:** You plan to go to the gym in the evenings and plan to go see a movie over the weekend.

**Enforceable:** You have cancelled your plans so you can be home with your teen to make sure there is follow through on their part.



## **4. ENLIST YOUR TEEN'S HELP TO IDENTIFY FAIR CONSEQUENCES.**

Talk with your teen. They may not feel like talking, but it's important to let them know you are willing to listen and are interested in knowing why the behavior happened. Try to come up with a consequence together.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEEN:**

- What happened?
- Why did this happen?
- Who do you think was hurt by your decision?
- How do you think you can make up (make amends) for your behavior?
- What can you do differently so this doesn't happen again?
- How can I help you?



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## **5. PICK a CONSEQUENCE WHICH MAY HELP EMPOWER YOUR TEEN.**

Most likely your teen will feel like they are being punished regardless of the consequence. However, your teen will experience a sense of safety and being cared for at the same time (conscious or unconsciously) when the consequence gives them opportunity for growth.

**Example: Your teen has never broken curfew and now strolls in an hour late.**

**Step 1:** Help your teen figure out why they were late. Did they lose track of time?, Did they misjudge how long something was going to take? Were they having so much fun they didn't care?

**Step 2:** Brainstorm ideas with your teen of how to prevent issues from happening again. Have them write the plan out and make sure you both agree it's a good plan.

