

## **The Business VS. Relationship Side of Parenting**

Consequences, accountability, and making unpopular decisions are part of the --business side-- of parenting your teen. Fun, laughter, nurturing behaviour, and play are part of the --relationship side-- of parenting.

The business side of parenting sets up the boundaries, structure, and your teens respect for you as the adult in charge of the family.

The relationship side, on the other hand, sets up the foundation of your relationship with your teen. It promotes your teens desire to come back to you and reconnect after you have had to hold the line on a certain boundary, give a consequence, or make a tough decision.

Both of these aspects of parenting fit into a balanced equation and are equally important. Being overly focused on one side or the other leads to an unhealthy relationship between you and your teen. In addition, in order for adolescents to grow and develop psychologically, they need both nurturing and caring and boundaries and consequences.

As a parent, you know that both sides are important, and yet in practice, it is not always easy to find that perfect balance between the two. You may be a stronger parent in one area more than the other without always being aware of it.

And yet, if you are having problems with your teen, it is worth to assess whether you are finding that right balance.

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### **Impact of Being Out Balance With Your Teen**

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-- The weaker the relationship with your teen the less

effective any consequences you implement will have

-- If you do not cultivate a strong relationship with your teen in the worst-case scenario your teen will not care about any consequence you impose.

-- The more frustrated you become with your teen, the more likely it is that you will pile on more severe consequences in hopes for a change or gaining control over his or her behaviour. This then leads to an imbalance on the business side, often making things worse.

-- When the relationship side is weak, your teen is likely to rebel and family conflict increases.

-- Once the situation has escalated to the point of continuous arguing and power struggles, it makes it even harder to focus on the relationship side of parenting.

As a parent, you are the authority figure in your home. If interactions with your kids have gotten to a point where you are mostly being critical or dishing out consequences then it is only natural that kids will distance themselves and not want to comply with any requests at all.

If, on the other hand, you focus too much on pleasing your child and not setting appropriate boundaries and expectations, they may disrespect you and at worst, any consequences you give will be ignored.

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**If you feel that the relationship side with your teen is lacking here are some things you might try:**

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-- Find something positive to say to your teen throughout the week

- Take the time to be with your teen where you will not be distracted
- Focus on teens positive qualities and tell them how you appreciate them
- Listen to your teens ideas even when you disagree
- Laugh and joke around with your teen
- Go on an adventure together
- Play something together

Depending where you are in the relationship with your teen you may have to start with just one simple positive thing a day before anything deeper and meaningful can develop. But if you view the relationship side of parenting as being just as important as the business side, and are willing to work at it, then you may be surprised the next time you ask him/her for a simple favour, do his/her homework, or to turn off the computer. Arguments may decrease and you may find that your teen is more cooperative and willing to do what you ask. Your home will be more harmonious and your teen will be happier.

As a parent finding that right balance between the business and relationship side to parenting is an on going process. Often there are many factors within a family system that can tip the balance to one extreme or another for a parent. However, the better the relationship side is between you and your teen then the more respect you will get for the business side when you need to put your foot down and hold a boundary or expectation. Teens need both structure and relationship and you are the primary source for that in their lives.