

MANAGING CONFLICT

Preteens are children between the ages of 10 and 12. Many important changes occur in children during this time. Every child is different. As you try some of the suggestions below, keep your individual child's personality in mind.



Try sitting down together. Talk calmly about the results of your child's behaviour, and discuss what would be a fair consequence.

Conflict between parents and children often starts to increase in the preteen years, and then even more in the teenage years, so it is important to work on solutions for managing conflict early on. Finding good conflict management strategies will help make your lives calmer and your relationship stronger, and teach your child to handle conflict with others. Remember, a certain amount of parent-child conflict is completely normal and is one of the ways your child practices being more independent. You may have more conflict with one child than another – every situation and personality is different, remind yourself that some things you just can't control.



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How you can help – and stay connected to your child

1. **Stay calm.** Try to deal with conflict in a quiet and calm way, even though you may be frustrated and tired. It is hard to do this all the time, but shouting at your child makes it difficult for them to listen to what you have to say and can make the conflict worse, since they may see you as being unreasonable.
2. **Listen to your child.** Ask your child about the situation that is causing trouble and let them talk to you about it. If you demand obedience without hearing what your child has to say, it can create hard feelings and your child might start hiding their activities from you. When you have a better understanding of how your child feels, you might decide to be more flexible with the rules or change them to reduce conflict in the future.
3. **Be respectful.** In any conflict situation, if you want your child to treat others with respect – including you – show respect for your child as well. Focus on the facts of the situation. Try not to shame or criticize your child, which can make conflict worse. Even if your child shouts at you, try to remain calm.
4. **Focus on the important issues.** Remember that some conflicts may not be worth arguing about. Try to reduce conflict with your child by concentrating on the most important conflicts and letting others go. For example, a situation where your child's safety or health is in danger is much more important than whether your child completes her homework by a certain time of day. If your child sees that you can compromise, he is much more likely to listen to what you have to say when you need him to.
5. **Walk away from the conversation if you need to.** Don't be afraid to stop the conversation and walk away if discussion becomes too heated. You might say something like, "I won't talk to you when you use that tone of voice. We can continue this conversation when you can be more respectful." This is a good strategy to use to prevent people from saying things they may later regret.



"I hate when my parents yell at me and then say "Don't raise your voice at me!" when I try to respond. I wish they would speak to me the same way they want me to speak to them."

– Sofia, Age 11

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