

Final Thoughts

Here are a few ideas that will help you guide your teen and not control them.

- Agree on a signal that your teen can use when they feel like you are trying to control them. However, you both have to be willing to listen to the other person's viewpoint.
- Don't try to rescue them from the natural consequences of their own choices. That's a really tough one!
- Make sure that they always know that your love is not dependent on their decisions. You will always be there for them.
- Know that you won't always agree with your teen's choice, and they shouldn't ask you to.
- Recognize when you need to step in to a situation that your teen is not equipped to handle. Prayer is absolutely necessary for discernment.
- Just remember that your teenager is becoming an adult, and you are the best one to parent them through this. Otherwise God would never have chosen you to do it!

Source: ministrytoparents.com

Guiding Without Controlling



Guiding v. Controlling

How do you guide your teenager without controlling them? Isn't that the \$64,000 question? Now, please understand that your teenager will feel that most of the time you are just trying to control them. But your teenager is also your richest source of information when it comes to figuring out this completely confusing conundrum.

Give them a voice when it comes to setting family rules. Ask them about curfews and family expectations (i.e. babysitting younger siblings) and consequences for broken rules. Ask them what they think are fair consequences when the rules are broken. It is amazing what will happen when they have a say. They will take ownership and also understand that they can't blame you and call you unfair when they are the ones who agreed to it in the first place. Our teenagers are fast becoming adults that will one day make their own choices and rules without any responsibility to you, the parent. What a grand opportunity to teach our teens while they are under our roof how to set those rules and expectations to glorify God! Whether they like it or not, and whether they realize it or not, they do listen to you.

Our teenagers deal with choices concerning sex, drugs, alcohol, friends, authority, academic stress, conflicting emotions, social media followings, bullies, sexual orientation, God, cults, and many more things that descend upon them sometimes daily. And the last thing that they need in their life is another adult that is trying to control them through manipulation, force, and coercion.

God did not give you your child to make you look good. He blessed you with that teenager to teach them how to make God look good. And it is not by putting them in controlling environments, under controlling teachings, or with controlling people. It is only by teaching them His absolute truths through great love and mercy, and then understanding that they have a choice.

Give Your Teen Choice

What? Give my teenager a choice? Mind blowing, isn't it? Some of you may not agree with this. But does our God not do the same for us? Is that not one of the hallmarks of His love for us? He gives us His Word, His guidelines, and His thoughts on how we should live our lives for His glory. But never once does He force His will on us. Not one time, does He withhold His love from us when we choose to step outside of His perfect will for our lives. Now, He does allow consequences in our lives when we choose unwisely. That's also a part of His love.

So how do we guide our teenager without controlling them? First and foremost, they must know that our love is not dependent upon their choices. We will always love them. No matter what. But we will also allow them to bear the consequences for their choices without rescuing them. And we will celebrate when their choices bring success!

Controlling our teen is the result of fear. Fear of losing them, fear of them making a horrible mistake, and even fear of them embarrassing

us with their choices. But anything done out of fear, is never done for the right reason or in the best interest of another person. You love your teenager deeply. Show them that by helping to guide them through this minefield with your wisdom, your love and mercy, and sometimes even with your silence. They will then see a true picture of God's unconditional love through you.

God Gives us Choice

Now we know that every teenager is different, but one thing that is the same in all teenagers is their passionate desire for independence. And it often seems that they are constantly, almost intentionally, choosing the opposite of what we think is wise!

I don't know about you, but that sounds an awful lot like my relationship with God! How many times have you made a decision or choice only to realize God was working in the situation the entire time? But did He ever once force you to choose His way or did He give you the freedom to make your own decision?

The crazy thing about the love of God is that it came first! John 15:16 says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you..." And that is the very thing we can relate to as a parent! We know that same kind of love when it comes to our teenagers. And the way we choose to love God back is by humbling our free will to His will. We don't always do it, and neither do our teens.