



Family Matters

Making Family Life Easier

Having your Buttons Pushed

Something we can definitely say about teenagers, is that they know how to push their parent's buttons. Instinctively it seems they know how to get a reaction from their parents; which is not surprising given that they have had at least twelve or thirteen years to watch and learn what works.

Why do teenagers push their parents buttons?

Mostly to see what they can get away with!! Depending on a parents reaction to their buttons being pushed teenagers develop strategies for getting what they want. Common buttons that teenagers will push are the guilt and the stress buttons. If you are out working or do not have enough time to spend with your teenager, you may against your better judgement do things for your teenager or let them do things or get away with things as you feel guilty. Teenagers know this and will push the guilt button when they want to do or get something they want. Another favourite button of theirs to press is the stress button. Teenagers quickly figure out when you are most likely to buckle under the pressure and give in, like when you have just arrived in after a long day at work and have to bring other family members to activities as well as make the dinner and get the shopping in, as you have already promised a friend some help at the weekend. At this point you have hit your stress limit and the last thing you want to do is go to war with your teenager and so you give in.

Teenagers will use different strategies to push the buttons. One of the most common ones is steamrolling, an experience most parents have on a daily basis. Steamrolling is when teenagers attempt to get what they want by wearing the parent down through continuously repeating their request... 'Can I go to the shops with Sarah, can I, can I'. Five minutes later you hear the same request 'Can I go please...', 'Please can I go'. Having repeatedly told them no, you go into a different room only to turn around and find them standing beside you again asking 'Can I go, c'mon, please...everyone is going now'. Out of sheer frustration and for some peace you reluctantly give in. When this happens the teenager learns that when they continue to push you, (and let's face it they have more energy to keep pushing) you will give in. A way of dealing with steamrolling is to fight fire with fire. Develop a simple sentence of your own and repeat it like a broken record. For example 'You can go to the shops when your homework is done' Keep replying with the same sentence, no further discussion required.

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