



Family Matters

Making Family Life Easier

Teenagers and Homework

Having spent the full day at school the last thing most teenagers want to do is homework. When this happens the inevitable battle of power begins between parent and child. With parents trying to engage their teenager's cooperation and teenagers for the most part resisting and rebelling against it. For many parents, cooperating means 'do what I tell you to do' for teenagers this invites rebellion against being controlled. A more helpful approach parents could use is to guide their teenagers to use their own power in useful ways.

In the case of homework, give the teenager the opportunity to brainstorm and come up with solutions that work for themselves and everyone else. Teens are much more motivated to follow a plan they are involved in. So let them come up with a plan for their daily routine that includes time for their homework. An example of such a plan could look something like this

3:30-4:00 Relax after a long day at school
4:00-4:30 On laptop with friends
4:30-5:30 Homework
5:30-6:00 Relax before dinner
6:00-6:30 Dinner
6:30-7:00 Finish homework if not already done
7:00-8:00 Favourite TV programmes or catch up with friends.

Allowing them to come up with their own plan gives teenagers some power, which tends to invite cooperation rather than rebellion. It takes parents out of the loop and allows the routine to be the boss and not the parents; and gets rid of the 'Did you do your homework yet?' question that can cause so many arguments.

Once a plan has been agreed, it is important for parents to hold their teenagers accountable. This can be done in a kind but firm way. For example, if a parent notices that their teenager is not following their plan, they can offer them a friendly reminder. If the young person is continually unable to stick to the routine then a consequence, which should be agreed on beforehand, needs to be implemented.

Parents of teenagers often have difficulty trying to figure what responsibilities are theirs and what responsibilities they need to hand over to their teenagers. With homework and study, teenagers need to 'hold their own bag'. After you have given them the space, the time, and the tools, they need to do their learning, the rest is up to them. The results they obtain are down to them and not a reflection on you as a parent. I am not saying that handing this responsibility over is an easy thing to do and that you won't worry, but teaching young people to take responsibility for themselves is part of them becoming successful adults.

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