

The Easy Way to Stop Arguing with your Teenager!

Congratulations on requesting your guide: “The Easy Way to Stop Arguing with your Teenager!”

This is a simple structure that I have used many times with my own teenagers and my teenage clients. It’s not always easy and it won’t ward off all your arguments because arguing is part of life, especially with a teenager. What it will do is drastically reduce the amount of pointless arguments you have and give you a simple structure for making all your conversations more productive.

Who am I?

I’m Vicki Raven and I am the founder of Caterpillar Learners and vickiraven.com. I have been a teacher for 30 years now right from the beginning of my career I always had a feeling that there was something missing from the way we educate children and teenagers in the UK. As my experience grew, and I had my own children, I thought more and more that children are quickly labelled: they are clever, bossy, pretty, sporty, shy etc. Many of these labels can appear to be positive, but still, I have found we all take on these labels and it can limit us, sometimes so much it can make us ill.

More than that parents often feel incapable of supporting their children and teenagers. They feel out of their depth and that the “professionals” know better than them. I want parents to feel confident and capable of supporting their teenagers through school and their formative years and not accept that upsetting behaviour such as constant arguing is just the way it is.

I have several friends who have told me they have either moved abroad or to the other end of the country to get away from their parents. And they did this as soon as they could. They also say it wasn’t because their parents were particularly horrible but they just felt their parents didn’t give them what they needed.

People often say to me that I’m really fortunate to have such a great relationship with both my parents and my teenagers. Well I don’t think it’s anything to do with luck. It’s all about building a great relationship. And the responsibility is yours, as a parent. The challenge is that we’re never taught how to be a parent and we do the best we can.

The world is a very different place now for parents and teenagers to even 20 years ago and with technology it is changing ever faster. My passion is to show you, as a parent, how it *is* possible to create a successful relationship with your kids and teenagers without resorting to moaning and shouting.

1. Just Start!

Starting is the first step! This may sound obvious but also may be the most difficult step.

You may have been put off trying to talk to your teenager if things have gone badly before but hold on to hope and just start!

Getting the beginnings right is really important before you say anything at all. How many times have conversations ended in disaster because your teenager has asked you something difficult, or made a throw away comment, just as you're rushing out of the front door?

Are you surprised when you raise an issue from Parents' Evening in the car on the way home from a challenging and late night?

Or have you tried to tackle a sticky issue and just made matters worse?

Pick the right time to have the conversation.

You might want to agree a time when you won't be disturbed and also set a time limit.

Or you might just want to have a casual conversation in the car on the way to school.

Be sensitive to the right timing and situation. Keep it short. Teenagers hate to be nagged endlessly.

You might want to let your teenager know what to expect from the conversation and ask them what they expect.

Think about what's going on in your teenager's head. Their experience of "adult talks" might be that the adult tells them what's going to happen, without listening at all to their point of view.

Depending on how old your teenager is, and the nature of the problem, you may want to be the one leading the conversation, but that still doesn't mean just telling them how it's going to be.

Try to understand your teenager's language. They may use different words to you. Don't be put off by that, just accept it's a generational thing.

2. Delve a Little Deeper

Now you've broken the ice and you've started chatting you can start to find out more about what's going on. It's important to really understand what you both want from the conversation and to build on the trust and closeness you have started.

It's important to ask your teenager what *they* want to achieve as well as providing your support and suggestions. They may not have a clear idea of an outcome and that's fine – they may just want to be heard. Many of us are rescuers and want to find a solution for everyone, but sometimes that's

not possible or necessary. So be sensitive to knowing whether it's appropriate to offer any suggestions.

Remember it's about the *best possible* outcome for both sides. You want to feel comfortable with any decision that is made and your teenager wants to feel they have had some input into the decision.

Ask questions about what they want and what the general situation is now. Beware of rushing in and getting too deep and meaningful too quickly. This could feel like an inquisition and just put your teenager off and silence them. It could also put you off, if you feel like an interrogator. This stage is very much about building trust and closeness without which you can't guide them through the rest of the conversation. You may even decide not to move on for a while so that you can keep building a great relationship.

It's important to use the right kind of vocabulary because if you get it wrong here an argument could quickly escalate without you realising you have communicated badly. Does that happen to you?

Show genuine interest and curiosity in what your teenager is saying. Remember it's often about being heard, acknowledged and valued. You are trying to get to understand their perspective and whether you, with all your skills and talents, can offer a solution.

Place your energy and focus on listening, acknowledging and valuing your teenager's point of view and then watch as the conversation finds its flow. The rest of it will feel so much more comfortable than perhaps you are used to.

3. What's the Problem???

As you're a parent you might feel as if you spend a great deal of your time solving problems or managing arguments. It's a bit like herding sheep or nailing a jelly to the wall isn't it? It might be a homework query, a friendship problem, a health issue, general stress or just your teen picking a fight.

Of course the other end of the communication spectrum is silence. And that is as much of a worry and challenge as argumentative teenagers. If you get the cold shoulder from your teenager spend some time on the previous 2 steps before you launch into this phase.

It's important not to move onto this step until you're sure your teenager trusts you to be sensitive and really listening.

During this stage encourage your teenager to focus on the problem and how it is affecting them. You don't want to put their back up and put them on the defensive so be compassionate in your questioning and probe gently. They need to feel that you are asking because you care and have their

best interests at heart. They must feel completely comfortable opening up about the things that are causing them pain or frustration.

A word of warning! Many of us say we'd like to be able to take the pain away from our children. If you have built good trust, and you ask the right sort of questions, your teenager will open up and tell you more about the issues that are troubling them.

When they do that you are naturally going to want to come to their rescue by jumping in and telling them how you can help. But don't. That's when you will start to come across as judging and telling.

Instead just listen to them. It's so important for your teenager to feel heard as this will deepen the trust between you and validate their position. And as I've said there may not be an obvious solution, sometimes we all just need to have a good old moan and get things off our chest in a safe place.

4. No Problem!

This is where you start to get your teenager to imagine what their life would be like if that problem didn't exist.

You start to get your teenager to imagine how things will be in their future. You want them to be excited about their vision but also calm and confident. It may be that they want to change something concrete but it might be that they just choose to feel differently about the situation.

So now ask questions and make suggestions that get them to feel that future as a reality and the effect that will have on them. This is the beginning of negotiation and collaboration. Get them to see, hear and feel the new possibilities. Encourage them to suggest and explore possible solutions with you.

Ask them what they think they should do. Don't panic! They'll probably ask you what you think because they value your support. This gives you the opportunity to talk about the possibilities. Start exploring the things that might get in the way of their vision. What obstacles might they have to tackle and how might you be able to help them?

Now it's only natural that your teenager will have some concerns and resistance about working with you to a solution. They might even start to have a strop. Just listen to them. It's human nature to be wary of change. Try to get their concerns out in the open and then you know up front what you're up against.

Practice getting your teenager to describe how they want things to be different. It does take practice as

they may have never been asked before. Ask them questions that make their vision as real in their minds as possible and they will be even more motivated to work towards that goal.

5. Make a Decision

Your teens are not little children that you can make do things. They're nearly adults and it's much better to agree something than to try to impose your will upon them. That means there is less possibility of there being any confrontation.

The truth is you may not be able to solve every problem and actually you don't need to all of the time. Not every problem needs solving, sometimes it just needs an airing and acknowledgement.

This stage is perfect for working out whether something needs to be changed or done. I know that many parents feel they need to have an answer for everything in order to feel in control. Be confident that you can have a great conversation with your teenager and that may be all that's needed.

Asking the right questions and responding in the right way will help you to see exactly what's needed at that time. Of course, every conversation will be slightly different but you will have all the skills you need to handle that.

Agree on some sort of decision

Now, I just want to reassure you at this point. You might be thinking this all sounds a bit contrived and that you would just love having spontaneous conversations with your teenager. Well, I think that's great and as a parent myself I love that. But if you're having problems with your teenager a structure might get you going.

Thank you for reading the guide. I hope you have found it useful and are already putting the points into practice when you're talking to your teenagers. I hope it's working for you and that you feel comfortable with the system.

If this has got you started and you'd love to know how to make it even better with your teenagers the next step for you is to [book a free 30 minute session](#) with me where I can find out about you and explain to you how you can improve things even more.

You can do that by emailing me at vicki@caterpillarlearners.co.uk