

## **Bridging the Generation Gap**

### **My child thinks I'm her enemy**

Parents, when their offspring enter the dreaded teen years, look back nostalgically on the days when their children hadn't learned to speak yet, were cute and adoring, and hung on to every word that their parents said. One day, puberty happens and the sweet angels of yesterday begin to act like their parents are their worst enemies.

Kamini Sundaram says, "I don't know what's come over my daughter, Padma. She's always arguing with me about the silliest things. A single day doesn't go by without her screaming at me and storming out of the room. I don't know how to deal with her. In my day, I was not allowed to raise my voice to my parents."

Jacob Abraham is as confused about his son, Vivek. He says, "I've always wanted to give my son the best of things, but his demands never seem to end. He's constantly asking me for money to go out to pubs and discos and to buy the 'latest' clothes. If I say no, he makes me feel like a tyrant and says that none of the other parents object."

### **Being 'grown up' isn't all fun and games**

Teenagers are a mass of confusion as they sit on the fence between their childhood and adulthood. Growing up can be quite scary. While being 'grown up' has many attractions, the responsibilities that go with it often come as a nasty surprise. For instance, teenagers want to stay out till all hours of the night, but when it comes to waking up in the morning in time for classes, it's a different story. Parents must make them understand that if they want to party hard, they must also work hard.

### **My child is ashamed of me**

Parents may feel a little like discarded old shoes, as friends become all-important to their children. It's not unusual for teenagers to go through a phase when they feel ashamed of their parents, afraid that their might not live up to their friends' standards. This can be very hurtful for parents, but they shouldn't take it personally. Just be cordial to your children's friends and maintain a distance. However, do not brook any discourteous behaviour for your children.

## **I want my freedom**

Teenagers are always talking about their freedom, usually in context of how their parents are obstacles. The minute you give children a curfew, or object to their clothes or hair, or do not allow them to go away for the weekend, you become the evil dictator who will never understand. Suddenly, 'generation gap' becomes a buzzword. It's as if one day you and your child find yourselves on opposite sides of the fence and there's no meeting ground. Each one feels that the other is speaking a foreign language.

## **Age is more than a number**

**However, parents don't realize that if they were to throw in the towel and let their teenagers run wild without any supervision, it would be a truly frightening experience for their children.** Teenagers may not know it or admit it, but they need their parents to guide them about what's right and what's wrong. This is one area where age does matter and no matter how things change, parents should go with their instincts when it comes to deciding that some things are just not done.

## **Communication is the key**

This is the time when teenagers try to become individuals in their own right and try to move out from under the protective wing of their parents. They will try out many things in order to be 'in' with the crowd whether it's smoking, drinking, wearing skimpy clothes or even losing their virginity. This is not the time to play the great dictator and alienate your children. Talk to them, but don't talk down to them.

The way to do it, is not by making yourself out to be the enemy and coming down on them heavily for every transgression (and there will be many). Try to lay down the ground rules right in the beginning. It is difficult for anyone to interpret the teenage mind, but try to convey the fact that you're on their side. Parents tend to forget that they were teenagers too once and their self-righteousness doesn't win them any points with their children.

**Most parents tend to forget that babies do grow up someday and when the time comes, they must let them go and find their own way in the world. You can't protect your children forever and they won't thank you if you try to.**

Courtesy: <http://www.indiaparenting.com/raisingchild/data/raisingchild046.shtml>