



Teen Curfew Conflicts

My son and I have been arguing about his curfew all summer. We have different opinions about what it should be. This has also created a problem for his younger brother as he feels that his curfew should be the same. How do you determine what is an appropriate time?

Curfew controversies have been a source of contention between teens and parents for many generations. We argued with our parents about it, and, now, you are faced with the same situation. Unfortunately, most adolescents feel that this rule is a parental power play and are more concerned with the own freedom and independence than parental feelings. This situation, however, is an opportunity to teach you kids about setting limits, social responsibility and common courtesy. It is an important conversation, so prepare wisely.

Set up a family meeting to discuss nighttime boundaries. Check the local laws in your community and ask other parents what limits they have set. Reach an agreement time together as this will provide the best opportunity for success. Post the rules on the refrigerator for all to see and provide the occasional reminder to ensure your child's compliance. Say things like "see you before midnight" as they are walking out the door. Gentle reminders about curfew times should not provoke arguments.

Once you have established the curfew, determine the consequences with your teens' assistance. There is typically very little arguing when enacting jointly created predetermined rules but forming a consequence "on the spot" could result in a volatile and emotionally poor parenting decision. Also if you son is late, make sure to ask why before enacting the punishment. On occasion, there may actually be a good reason for the momentary lapse of responsibility, and this could be a chance to connect and discuss bigger issues.

At the core of imposing a curfew is parental concern, and your children should know this. Explain that you trust them to make good decisions but are concerned about their safety and how the behavior of others may impact them. Being home on time is a simple courtesy that allows mom and dad to sleep more and worry less.

Lastly, don't be too rigid. As your sons become more responsible, tell them how much you trust them and begin to ease up on the rules. This will foster open and honest parent/teenager communication and allow you to stay involved lives of your kids.