

TEEN: TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

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Teens and pre-teens are masters at side-tracking an adult who is confronting them: (Parent) "You always forget to put out the trash!" (Child) "Uh-huh! I put it out once last month. You forget to give us our lunch money all the time." (Parent) "I never forget your lunch money, you....."

The topic has shifted from taking out the trash to lunch money, and the parent is now on the defensive. Take the word, "always" out of the original sentence, "You forgot to take out the trash."

In our home, forgetting to do one chore is volunteering to do two chores—and those chores are to be completed on THEIR time (before you go out to play, before you watch TV, before you can talk on the phone....). Consequences put on THEIR time catch their attention!

When confronting a child use, PRS: (PROBLEM) "You didn't put the trash out today. (RULE) "The rule in our home is that you do a chore for the right to live here. It is your day to put out of the trash." (SOLUTION) "I put the trash out today. Before you go to play with your friends you will (1) empty the dishwasher and (2) vacuum the living-room and dining room."

The PROBLEM needs to be stated as factual with no judgment in it. The RULE is a rule that the child already knows exists, the SOLUTION is a reasonable consequence for the choice the child made. (See "Eldest Child is Not a Parent" for more on PRS.)