

Chapter

11



Who wants to live with their parents forever?! Now is the time to start becoming an independent woman.

Independence is a natural thing. If a parent presents things to their teen in a loving, caring way, the need for a teen to push away is less of a factor than a parent allowing the space for the teen to become independent. Parents can no longer correct their teens as children, hounding them and telling them exactly what to do. You now must treat them as adult, reason with them and respect them.

If a parent can allow a degree of independence within guidelines and boundaries, the child will grow and mature fast. If a teen is staying too clingy, parents need to push them away reminding them that they have to make their own decisions on what they want to do and how. However, there is a place and responsibility of parent that can't be given away at any time. You must find the appropriate balance.

It is crazy how independence is something teens desire and fight for every day, but in many areas they push it away and refuse to take on the responsibilities of a truly independent adult. It is those very responsibilities that will actually improve your teen's self-esteem and make her feel good about herself. Feeling like an adult and being treated like an adult are wrapped up in making wise adult decisions during the teen years. As a parent, you must allow your teen to become independent of you. Some parents have a hard time letting go, but you are not doing your teen any favors by doing this. The most helpful thing you can do is push them to be independent and let them have the independence they seek (within reason of course).

As your teen shows that she can responsible for herself, it should bring trust from you. As she proves her ability to make good decisions, boundaries set by you need to be loosened to encourage her to continue to become more responsible and independent. If she does something to later hinder that trust it is normal to want (and need) to limit her independence until she proves herself capable again, but don't make it impossible. Go into this process knowing that she will make good decisions and she will make bad decisions, but all are necessary for her to become a responsible adult. The more decisions you allow her to make on her own, followed by the appropriate consequences or rewards will shape her into the decision maker you want her to become.

Exercise for your teen: List the areas where you have already been given some freedom and independence. How does this independence make you feel?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some other areas you are seeking independence? What could you do differently to prove you are ready to handle it?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Most teens do not have a realistic sense of what life would be like completely independent of their parents. Some think it would be a piece of cake, while others think it would make life impossible. Your teen needs to understand the reality of the place in between. Either way, your teen has to have some independence and see what happens. She needs to get herself through tough situations and she needs to work for and earn her own things. There is something to be said for taking care of yourself and earning your own things. She will learn be proud of herself for working through a difficult time or for working hard to make money to buy what she wants. Things take on a whole new meaning to teens when they buy them with their own hard-earned cash—especially big things. It’s amazing how they take things for granted when they are given things, but when they pay for them themselves, they have a whole new appreciation and commitment to care for them. Value can often be defined by how easy something is to get.

This doesn’t mean you have to suddenly cut off all ties and make your teen pay for everything. But it does mean making her earn her own money and pay for things that fall into the “want” category. While she is living under your roof, you are probably committed to taking care of her basic needs for food, personal items, school supplies and (some) clothes. Check to see how much you are giving her beyond that, though. Are you giving her money to go shopping with her friends, to go to the movies, or for her unlimited text package? There is no clear-cut definition of what parents should and should not pay for as it is up to each individual family, but take some time to look at what you are spending on your teen and consider passing the responsibility on to her for non-essential things. If you know your teen is too busy or too young to get a job and you are concerned about making her pay for her own things, try to think of ways that you can help her earn them. Have her do an extra chore or something around the house. This way you are not leaving her

with something she cannot achieve, but you are also teaching her to be responsible and have some work ethic. It is important that a teen have some chores to do to contribute to the family. It is not unreasonable for her to clean her room once in a while, do the dishes or take out the trash. She should be able to take responsibility for her own laundry as she gets older. At least get the dirty clothes to the laundry room and the clean ones back into the closet.

Exercise for your teen: What are some things that you have been given? How well have you taken care of them? How much pride do you take in them?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are some things that you have purchased or earned for yourself? How well have you taken care of them? How much pride do you take in them? Do you notice a difference in how the things you earn make you feel?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Growing up and being responsible is something your teen is wired to do. When they remain childish and refuse to grow up, it interferes with the way things are supposed to be and in turn hurts their sense of self. When your teen grows up and takes the leap toward true independence, she actually learns who she is. As a child, her dependence on you means that part of her identity is with you. Yes, she has