

## Five Top Tips For Negotiating With Your Children

As children move into adolescence it is appropriate for parents to move toward negotiating with them, rather than simply telling them what to do. This supports them to become more independent, encourages them to be more responsible, and they are more likely to follow through with actions that they have had a part in determining.

Firstly, check that this issue is something around which you are willing to negotiate. Is negotiation appropriate around this issue?

- **What Is Your Bottom Line?**

Find out as much as possible about the situation beforehand. Spend time thinking through the issues, maybe discussing them with a friend or partner. Decide in advance what your bottom line is. This is the position that you will take if you are unable to come to a negotiated agreement.

- **Know The Terrain But Not The Path**

Avoid planning the discussion in a detailed way as this will stop your child coming up with things you hadn't thought of which might be helpful. Be open to exploring possibilities and thinking creatively, even if you think that a particular line of thinking will not lead to a viable solution.

- **Go For Win-Win**

Make it your goal to get what is best for you and your child. An 'unfair deal' is less likely to be enacted and will breed bad feeling.

- **Be Hard On The Problem But Soft On The People**

Be warm, friendly, respectful, accepting and helpful – always work on maintaining a good relationship with your child. Be willing to share your feelings, where appropriate, and always recognise their feelings. Avoid making mutual care and respect conditional upon an agreement. Work to get an alliance – unite against the problem rather than against each other. Do this by making this an explicit goal, and by showing that you want to discuss in a fair, open and honest way.

- **Listen, listen, listen**

Spend time listening to your child, even if you think there is no possibility of agreement. This communicates love and respect even if you finish by not agreeing. Let them explore possibilities and come to answers themselves by being listened to, rather than simply telling them. Empathise with your child and help them to empathise with you. Really try to see their point of view.

Only state your bottom line if you are sure a negotiated agreement is not possible.