Ask the Expert

Teens & Adults: Understanding Strategies to Reduce Conflict
A partnership between CHADD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The information provided by CHADD’s National Resource Center on ADHD is supported by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38DD005376 funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
Resources, Information & Support

Monday–Friday, 1-5 pm Eastern
866-200-8098
customer_service@chadd.org
chadd.org/nrc
Ask the Expert

Teens & Adults:
Understanding Strategies to Reduce Conflict

Rosanna Breaux, PhD, LCP

chadd.org/nrc
866-200-8098
customer_service@chadd.org
Teens and parents: Understanding strategies to reduce conflict

Rosanna Breaux, PhD, LCP
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Assistant Director, Child Study Center
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Why conflict increases during adolescence

• **Separation** - pulling away from parents and family to create an independent social group, typically consisting solely of friends
  - **Conflict Results From** – reduced involvement in the family, increased (sometimes risky) peer activities, disagreement on how much personal info parents should have
Why conflict increases during adolescence

• **Differentiation** – experiment with different interests and images to determine the type of person they want to be
  - Conflict Results From – identities that do not align with who the parent wants their teen to become
Why conflict increases during adolescence

• **Opposition** – challenging parent authority to become more self-determined
  o **Conflict Results From** – teens do not follow or take too long to follow parent requests and rules
Why conflict is especially high in families of teens with ADHD

• Difficulties with Executive Functions
  o Difficulties paying attention
  o Trouble organizing, planning, and prioritizing
  o Difficulty starting tasks
  o Problems managing time
  o Poor self-monitoring abilities
Why conflict is especially high in families of teens with ADHD

• Difficulties with Emotion Regulation
  o Low frustration tolerance
  o Impatient
  o Quick to anger
  o More impulsive reactions
  o More extreme reactions
Why conflict is especially high in families of teens with ADHD

• Motivational Deficits
  o Experiences with negative feedback from peers, teachers, and parents
  o Aversion to boring or difficult tasks
Why conflict is especially high in families of teens with ADHD

• Increased Risky Behaviors
  o Alcohol Use
  o Substance Use
  o Risky Sex
  o Poor Decision Making
Strategies to Reduce Conflict
General strategies to reduce conflict with teens

• Acknowledge and appreciate steps in the right direction, not just the final outcomes
  o Focus on and compliment effort
  o Provide 3 positives for every 1 negative

• Pick your battles – Ignore the small stuff!

• Provide opportunities for your teen to have choices and control when possible
General strategies to reduce conflict with teens

• Be firm and calm – volume does not increase your teen’s likelihood of listening

• Avoid being “unfair”
  o Provide consistent expectations
  o Consequences should fit the (mis)behavior
  o Once a privilege has been earned it can’t be taken away
Avoid Power Struggles During Conflict

• Conflict arises from two different sets of thoughts and emotions about the same issue

• Try to understand your teen’s emotions and thoughts

• Work on problem solving and compromising to address the situation
Avoid Power Struggles During Conflict

• Before trying to address and problem-solve a conflict, calm down using a coping skill
• Let your teen explain their perspectives
  o Encourage assertive but not aggressive communication
• Explain your perspective calmly
  o It’s okay to admit if you made a mistake or overreacted
• Collaboratively identify possible solutions to address the conflict
  o Choose one that both parties can agree on and try it out
  o Evaluate what worked and what should be modified to prevent future conflict
Want to learn more?
Check out these resources!


• RELAX Intervention Handouts - [https://www.calmerlab.com/the-relax-intervention](https://www.calmerlab.com/the-relax-intervention)

THANK YOU!

Teens & Adults: Understanding Strategies to Reduce Conflict
Teens & Adults: Understanding Strategies to Reduce Conflict