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**Sometimes Parents "Win" By Giving In**

**By Kalman Heller**

"Mom I want to put lavender and green streaks in my hair. All my friends are doing it."

Needless to say Mom's hair turned a few colors on the spot. And Dad? What's left of his hair was standing straight as he responded, "No daughter of mine is dying her hair green and purple!"

The battle lines were drawn.

At this point parents usually get into power struggles with their child. Scared about the sudden demands for unfamiliar changes parents are immediately worried that their child is heading for trouble and try to protect her by saying no. It is often believed that the issue is hanging around with "bad kids." In these post-Columbine days, there is also confusion about what represents normal adolescent behavior and signs of a deeper problem. In simplest terms, if your teen still makes some reasonable connections with you, albeit less often, and her general behavior has not undergone sudden, marked changes, she is probably just being a typical teen.

Part of your anxiety is the sense that the older she gets, the less control you feel you have over your teen's behavior. (Of course that control has been an illusion anyway but that's another story!) When parents just say no (to borrow a popular phrase) they are likely to only intensify their teen's resolve to do what they are not being allowed to do. Anger and disconnection are the probable outcomes when teens feel they are not being heard or understood. Think about how you have similar feelings when a spouse doesn't take the time to really listen to you.

A suggestion when teens begin to push the limits is to switch from the "benevolent dictator" model that most parents use with younger children to the "collaborative management" model that is so effective in the business world. Actually it helps if this has been a gradual transition through the childhood years, but, if not, it's time to make a conscious change. The latter model requires parents to recognize the limits of their influence over their children while at the same time recognizing that they are not as powerless as they often feel with teenage children. The primary tool in using this model is the art of successful negotiations.

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Your 14-year-old says, "This 11 o'clock curfew is for the birds. All my friends stay out until twelve and some get to stay out till one on Saturday nights. I feel like a jerk being the first one to go home every weekend. I want a later curfew!"

A frequent reply is "We think you're too young to stay out that late. There's nothing to do at that hour but get into trouble." Sometimes the parent throws in, "I'm sure all your friends don't have such late curfews."

"No way! I can get into just as much trouble before eleven."

He's right. So are you. And that is one of the key points. In dealing with most of the demands made by adolescents parents will find valid issues on both sides of the argument. It is important to recognize the significant issues pressuring your teen to push for changes especially the need to belong, to fit in with a group of friends. In fact one could characterize the parent-teen conflict as primarily the struggle

between parents and peers for influence over your teen's behavior.

In order to maintain a healthy and successful exchange it is important that all parties come away from the table feeling heard, understood, and with a sense of having a solution that is "win-win" rather than "win-lose." For example, in responding to the request for a later curfew, try starting the discussion by saying, "You're right." Those two words have an amazing way of diffusing an argument and creating a context for working out a solution. "You are getting older and probably many of your friends do have later curfews. We're not ready to make 12 your regular curfew but we're open to some kind of change. What do you suggest?"

One outcome of this discussion could be that the teen is given a monthly wild card for a 12:00 curfew to be used as decided by the teen. The understanding is that if this goes well in a couple of months it will increase to twice monthly. While some teens might still object experience has been that most are willing to work with their parents in this manner because they expected to be turned down and are surprised by the willingness of the parents to really listen and be open to change. It also gives the teen the chance to earn increased privilege and have control over when to cash in the wild card. That's especially helpful when there's an important party coming up and he wants to be able to stay out later.

Meanwhile you feel good about having slowed the process of increased freedom and walking away with a feeling of still having a role in guiding your teenager.

But what if there doesn't appear to be room for compromise? For example your 16-year-old daughter asks to go away for the weekend with her 18-year-old boyfriend to visit some of his friends at a nearby college. Whenever you believe the risks are too high you are going to say no - as you should. When the screaming dies down, try to understand the pressures on your daughter to do this. Part of it may be the fear that her boyfriend will decide to find an older girlfriend who has more freedom. There might be an alternative that is acceptable but sometimes there just isn't. In that case all that can be done is to validate her concerns but stand firm that this is not for 16-year-olds.

The reality is that sometimes teenagers challenge their parents with requests that they want you to turn

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down because they are scared but can't say no. They need you to be the "mean parents" who won't let her go as a face-saving device. Your teenager wants you to be strong. But how can you tell when she wants you to say no? Take your cues from the teen. My rule of thumb is that the more rigid and uncompromising she is, the more likely she doesn't want you to give in. If it's really important, she'll try to work out an acceptable compromise with you. For example, in this request, you may know a daughter of a friend who attends the college and would be glad to have your daughter stay with her. It could be also kept to a shorter visit with you agreeing to pick her up or arranging a bus ride home.

Meanwhile what happened to the request for green and lavender streaks? The solution may lie in limiting the amount of hair to be colored, and perhaps even agreeing to have it done by your hairdresser, though usually half the fun is the kids doing each other's hair. On this one you need to question why it's such a problem for you. One parent gave her okay except that it had to be done after attending a major family function that was coming up soon.

The idea of joining in the process is often helpful. A request for a tattoo was responded to by a father saying that because of the health risk and the permanence of it, he would say okay only if he could go along. His presence was negotiated to make sure it was sterilized equipment, a really skilled person, and that he would have some say about size and location. The son said okay but never got around to

making the appointment. A daughter asking for a nose jewel got a similar response; with the parent wanting to make sure it was safe and getting confirmation that the hole would go away after it was removed. The daughter did it, wore it for several months, and then stopped wearing it. Meanwhile she and her mother had a better relationship.

There is an irony to all this that must not be missed. The more you insist on having control the less you have. You actually have greater influence on your teen's life when you give up control in small but steady pieces. It also better prepares them for future years when they will have to make decisions on their own.

Dr. Heller is a clinical psychologist, now retired, who specialized in providing services to children, families, and couples since 1968. He has written over 150 columns about parenting and marriage which are available on his website,

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. He is a frequent media resource.

## **Cost Effective Business Marketing**

**By Shawn McMullen**

Looking for a profitable and cost effective to market your business? Try a scratch and win promotion.

Scratch and win cards are the best and most cost effective way to promote your business. Customers

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are always looking for an extra value in their purchases. A scratch card promotion will give your prospects the chance of winning something – in turn, your business itself will be a winner.

Scratch and win cards are perfect for promoting a new or existing product in order to increase excitement and traffic for your business. By using a scratch and win direct mail promotion you can give your customers an opportunity to earn a percentage of savings off their first purchase. A scratch card employee incentive program that will increase employee production and boost employee morale. By giving everyone the opportunity to win prizes, scratch and win cards generate enthusiasm amongst employees within your company.

Through the use of scratch and win cards, your company can also attract potential customers to further learn about your products and create your very own database of prospects.

Your company can generate its own creative edge against competitors rather than typical advertising. Scratch and win fundraising is a low cost, highly effective opportunity for your company to utilize scratch and win cards. The production rate of both your business and that of your business will greatly increase as a result of a scratch card fundraising program.

Overall, a scratch and win promotion will create excitement, promote growth, and increase sales!

You can have your scratch cards in your hands in as little as 10 days. Specialists are waiting to help assist you. Let your customers feel the excitement of winning with a scratch and win card!

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