

# Parenting Teens<sup>®</sup>

NOVEMBER 2016

KNOW. GROW. BECOME.

## THE DO'S AND DON'TS

*of dating*

**5** tips for  
building  
trust

*My teenager broke my trust.*

*Now what?*

## THE LIE OF

social media privacy

**GENERATION  
TMI**



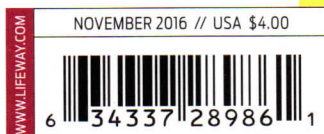
In the age of oversharing,  
it's not just our teens who  
have too much to say.

01

02

03

04



NOVEMBER 2016 // USA \$4.00

6 34337 28986 1

**LifeWay**  
Biblical Solutions for Life





# TRUST

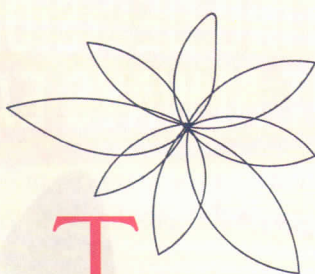
## ISSUES

.....

*Trust.* Our teens want it, and we want to give it. But sometimes it feels like there's something holding us back. Your teenager needs you to start letting go—and you need them to earn it. If trust issues have come to a standoff in your home, here are a few ways you can meet in the middle.

BY ABBY R. HILL





**T**he need to trust is engrained in all of us from birth.

When parents respond predictably and consistently to their newborn's needs, the infant establishes a sense of trust and security in the world. At the same time, the baby quickly becomes aware that the world is not always a predictable or safe place—our needs are not always perfectly met and, sometimes, bad things just happen. Therefore, competence, or “self-trust,” is also key in the child's cognitive and emotional development.

As Christians, we know that complete and unwavering trust can only be placed in God. Yet, in our earthly relationships, trust is a human need that follows us throughout life. It's important that we learn to let go, little by little, and give our teens guardrails of trust as they get older. But before we do, we have to know what they get out of it.



## TRUST AS HOPE

Trust is constructed upon reliability, integrity, and accountability. When our teens have it, they feel hopeful, which is a critical trait for a teenager. Hopeful teenagers are filled with purpose and motivation.

Adolescents who are hopeful have an increased self-concept and overall perception of well-being. They perform better academically and athletically, and experience better relationships at home, at school, and in the community. A hopeful heart developed at a young age is a lifelong blessing from God: *"For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth"* (Ps. 71:5, NIV).

## TRUST AS CONTROL

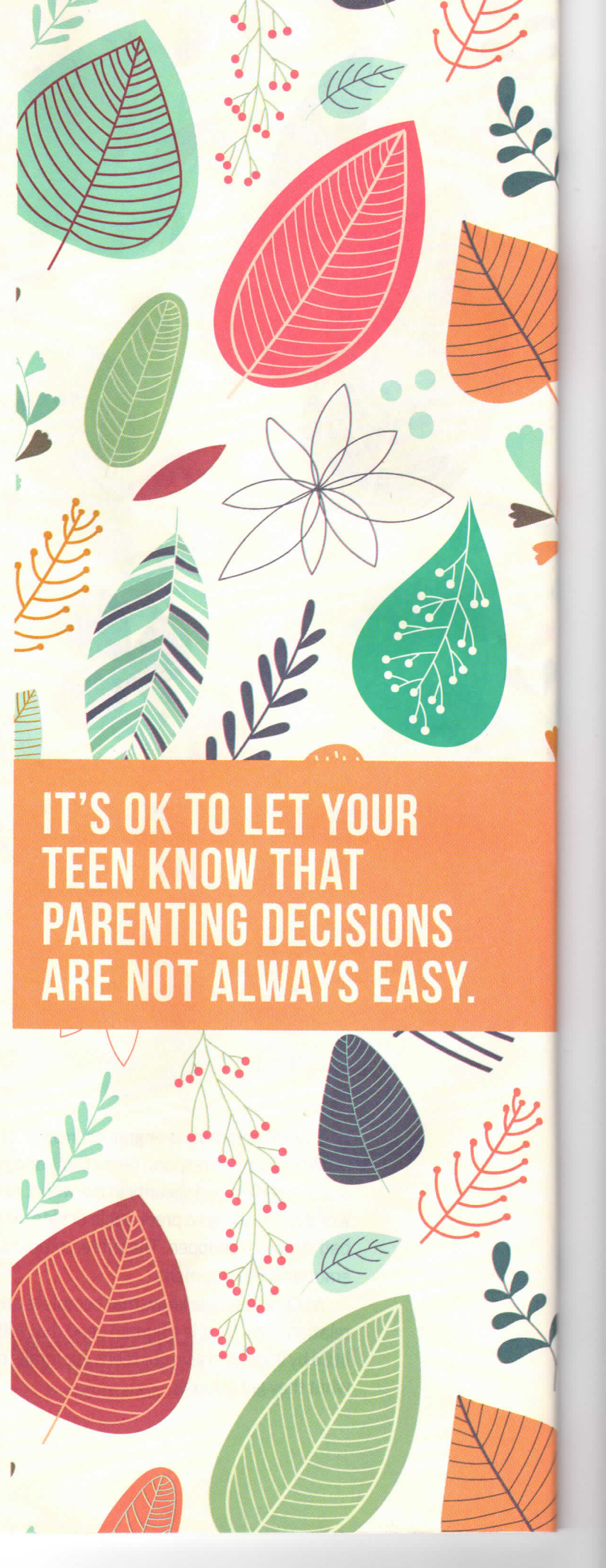
The term "control" often has a negative connotation, yet, in parenting, control should be associated with care, guidance, and responsibility. Parental control means boundaries, expectations, and mutual accountability—all things every teenager needs.

Parental trust exists on a continuum based on many factors including age, maturity level, and past behaviors. While a teen's "track record" certainly should influence future parental trust decisions, here let's focus primarily on the developmental aspects of adolescence.

Cognitive development during adolescence allows for abstract thought, logic, and introspection. Teens are able to think hypothetically, with conclusions and opinions more relative than absolute.

Developmentally, adolescence is a time of egocentrism with the belief that "the world revolves around me." While this thinking may manifest itself as selfishness, it may also be seen in self-consciousness and a sense of vulnerability. Most teens are impacted to some degree by peer pressure, social comparison, and the need to conform. Yet, older adolescents, with increasingly sophisticated thinking, begin to determine for themselves what is desirable and acceptable for them as they develop their own identity. All of these processes, occurring simultaneously in a teenager's life, culminate into a healthy quest for autonomy and independence.

At the center of this stage is trust, a requisite part of self-sufficiency and a challenge to the parent-teen relationship. Conflict with parents, particularly in resistance to parental control, is a common and expected part of this trust-building journey.



IT'S OK TO LET YOUR  
TEEN KNOW THAT  
PARENTING DECISIONS  
ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY.



## HELP THEM EARN IT

As the saying goes, trust is earned. It is gained through action, more so than through words. Allow your teen opportunities to do things to earn your trust. It's easy to know when your teen breaks your trust; it's harder to know when they've earned it. Identifying ways your teen can demonstrate to you their trustworthiness requires some specific and practical consideration.

Hold a "trustee" meeting with your teen, and share some of these ideas for ways they can show you they can be trusted:

- Complete all school work, keep up with homework, get good grades
- Bring back change from a shopping trip, have the credit card and not use it
- Come home on time, come home *before* curfew
- Make good choices in relationships, spend time together with your friends and parents
- Accept parent restrictions and any checks on cell phone and social media
- Share your thoughts, feelings, and goals with your parents
- Be truthful in words and deeds

These goals will help you understand your teen's level of trustworthiness. However, studies have shown that how much your teen trusts you influences the quality of your relationship more than how much you trust *them*. Use this important insight to conduct a self-check of your own thoughts, perspectives, and practices in trusting your teen. Ask yourself:

- Are there situations and experiences in my own life that cause me to struggle with trusting my teen?
- Does my life exemplify trustworthiness? Am I consistent and reliable in my parenting? What am I

doing on a daily basis to earn and maintain my teen's trust in me?

- Do I provide positive feedback when my teen honors my trust? Or, do I only react when they disappoint?

## TRUST IN PRACTICE

Don't confuse the affordance of trust with a hands-off parenting approach. While your teen seeks your trust, he or she also seeks your role in their life in setting boundaries and delivering predictable consequences.

Discuss with your teen their expectations for your trust. Share your own thought process with them—it's OK to let your teen know that parenting decisions are not always easy. Reach compromises and form trust agreements with your teen whenever possible, without relinquishing your authority to make the final determination.

Ask them to describe to you why they are worthy of your trust. This will help them process and think about the incredible responsibility of being trusted.

Finally, pray for wisdom and discernment in trust-related decisions for your son or daughter. Pray for and with them, so they will be able to know and honor trusting relationships.

***For tips on how to start the conversation at home, see our conversation starters on p. 43.***

**DR. ABBY HILL** is a school psychologist working in schools and private practice, specializing in adolescent and college-age students. She is a state certified teacher and is on faculty at a major Christian university. Dr. Hill is an author, trainer, and presenter on parenting, education, and child mental health at schools, churches, and in the community.

TRUST IS A  
HUMAN NEED  
THAT FOLLOWS US  
THROUGHOUT LIFE.