

Understanding Parent-Teen Conflict

(Sharon Foster, Ph.D.)

Factors Associated With Excessive Parent-Teen Conflict:

1. Poor Problem Solving Skills

2. Poor Communication Skills

3. Misguided Assumptions & Thinking:

negative, self-directed beliefs produce depression & anxiety ~

negative other-directed beliefs produce anger

• **Problem Beliefs For Parents:**

- **Ruinat**ion: if parents give teens too much freedom, the teen will make mistakes or misbehave in ways which will ruin their future lives
- **Perfectionism**: teens should instinctively know how to behave properly all the time without any parental intervention, and it is terrible upsetting if teens do not always behave perfectly
- **Obedience**: teens should always do what their parents say without questioning their parent's judgment
- **Self-blame**: parents are at fault for teens' mistakes or misbehavior
- **Malicious Intent**: teens misbehave on purpose to hurt their parents
- **Approval**: it is terribly upsetting if teens do not approve of parent's rules, regulations, and decisions

• **Problem Beliefs for Teens:**

- **Ruinat**ion: if parents put too many restrictions on teens, this will ruin the teen's life
- **Fairness: parent's rules are terribly unfair and unjust**
- **Autonomy**: teens should have as much freedom as they desire
- **Approval**: it is catastrophic for teens if parents do not approve of the teen's actions

4. Structural Problems in the Family:

- Parent's who don't work as a team
- Teen manipulates parents
- Triangulation (indirect communication)

5. Inconsistent Consequences for Teen & Positive Payoff for Conflict

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