

# Living With Children

By **John Rosemond**  
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Q: Our 15-year-old daughter is very demanding and, to be honest, self-centered. One of the things she does is ask one of us for something and demand an instant decision, as in, “Can I go to the mall with my friends?” If she doesn’t get the right answer, she begins to yell and become disrespectful and/or she goes to the other parent (in person, phone, text), but cleverly fails to tell him/her of the first parent’s decision. That, of course, causes tension and sometimes conflict between the two of us. We feel caught

between a rock and a hard place. If we tell her that she must wait on a decision until the two of us can collaborate, she begins to throw a temper tantrum. On the other hand, if one of us makes a unilateral decision, we often regret it. Any suggestions to help us resolve this?

A: Yep. First, make a list of “permissions” that the two of you agree upon, that don’t require collaboration. Henceforth, either of you can make any one of those decisions unilaterally. When the list is complete, share it

with your daughter, making perfectly clear (or as perfectly clear as is possible with a teenager who is demanding and disrespectful) that any item not on the pre-approved list requires collaboration. Tell her that if she can’t wait until collaboration is possible, the default answer is “no.” Inform her, furthermore, that yelling or any other form of disrespect means that “no” is the automatic answer to any and all requests for a week. That ought to do it.

Q: We have discovered that our 14-year-old son is bragging to the world over social media of exploits – even of a sexual nature – that he’s never experienced. We took away his phone privileges for a week, but that hasn’t stopped it. Help!

A: Given the well-known fact that smart phones enable irresponsible behavior in many if not most teens, I fail to comprehend the rationale behind otherwise intelligent adults giving them smart phones. There is, in fact, no rationale; there is only nonsense like “Well, that’s how they communicate” and “Let’s face it, their social lives depend on smart phones” and “I want us to be able to get in touch should an emergency arise.”

I know of plenty of teens who do not have smart phones. Instead, they have “Model A” phones that do not connect to the internet; phones that will

call and text (laboriously) who only use them responsibly, they make extra work for parents. Can someone please explain to me why, when an alternative exists, they are not suffering. They are somewhat behind the parents would choose to make extra work for themselves? C’mon. Stop fooling around with this. In your son’s hand, a smart phone becomes instantly toxic. Take his phone away...for good. Give him a “Model A.” Tell him he can have a smart phone when he’s living on his own and can pay for it and the monthly bill. That will certainly motivate him to emancipate as early as possible, which is certainly a win-win.

Let’s face it, folks. Smart phones create problems for parents. At the least, and even in the case of children

Family psychologist John Rosemond: johnrosemond.com, parentguru.com.

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