

2

Stop Treating Me Like a Child!

Introduction

Gain an insight into what we think about this controversial topic through an interview with a teenager. Learn how younger siblings can affect parents' judgments on the freedom they give their teenagers and how best to deal with this. Discussion on treating girls and boys differently with regard to going out by themselves, and the need to emphasize to your teens they need to earn the right to be treated like an adult.

I was surprised when I caught myself saying this earlier. It's not something I like to say; it's a bit of an immature protest, as it's usually just used as a single, unsupported phrase that does nothing but create arguments. I think the saying in itself, 'stop treating me like a child!' is a very uneducated thing to say (god I'm such a snob).

It's in this way that lots of teenagers say it without thinking – as I did earlier – and don't really mean it, and some say it to rebel against their parents and the way they treat them.

However, sometimes we really do mean it when we tell our parents

to stop treating us like children. Even now, at 15, my mum is very protective over me; for example, she doesn't like me eating beef jerky when there's nobody in the house because I might choke on it and die. I understand that mum cares about me, but really that is a bit over the top.

Another situation where we may be forgiven for saying 'stop treating us like a child' is when our parents keep reminding us not to do daft things that we were told to avoid as eight, nine, 10 year-olds – don't jump into the road in front of incoming cars, don't talk to strangers, wear your helmet on your bike. I don't want to be hurt any more than mum wants me to, so it just gets annoying when our parents tell us not to do potentially harmful stuff that we wouldn't do anyway.

When telling your teens not to do something potentially dangerous, remember that your teens don't want bad things to happen to them any more than you do.

I know parents mean well when they say these things, but to teenagers it just comes across as if they have very little trust in our judgment – something that parents should avoid like the plague, as one of the most important things to teenagers is to feel that we are being treated like adults.

Now this is a very interesting point. We teens all want to be treated like adults, and indeed we all see ourselves as adults, but let's just think about it for a moment. Stop treating us like children? Of course our parents will treat us like children: we *are* children.

We might have boyfriends and girlfriends, drink, have our own



bank accounts and travel abroad without our parents, but we're still only children. We teenagers are just a fifth of the way through our lives. We don't have the maturity, the experience, independence or the responsibilities that adults do.

So whilst one of the things that teenagers appreciate most is to be treated like adults, you still need to bear in mind that your teens are technically children.

Despite whatever reasons your teenagers may give, remember that your teens are actually still children.

You can use this argument to show your teens that they need to *earn* the right to be treated like adults – they must realise that it's not something they are automatically granted the second they turn 13.

If my parents think that I don't deserve to be treated like an adult, they'll tell me straight out. This is just the way to do it, as I then have to think about what I could do to gain my parents' trust. I won't just be nice for a day and then stop because that's *such* an old trick and my parents know me too well to be fooled when I do that. It's worked quite a few times though [cough].

Make it totally clear that your teenager needs to earn the right to be treated like an adult.

After speaking with friends, being treated like a child is one of the main things they say they dislike when discussing how they feel their parents treat them.

Here's an interview with a friend talking about the subject; you'll gather that it's pretty much unedited bar a few grammar imper-

fections, just as all interviews in this book are (I was going to star out the swearing to protect those younger readers, but I've always wanted to publish a book with a swear word in it).

jellyellie: Hi Kev! What have you done today?

Kev: Nothing.

jellyellie: Ah in the teenage spirit 😊 Now then, you have a younger brother don't you? How do your parents treat you in relation to him – do you get the same pocket money, chores etc.?

Kev: The same pocket money, not that it's enough for me to buy anything with. He does feck all, I'm made to do everything while he sits on his lazy arse whining!

jellyellie: Hmm, that sounds familiar. Now this might be pushing my luck a bit, but is there anything you appreciate about the way your parents treat you?

Kev: They couldn't care less about what I do.

jellyellie: In what sense – where you go and people you meet, or what you do with your free time at home e.g. computer/TV rather than something active (but of course there's nothing better than a good workout at our keyboards)?

Kev: Well, they wouldn't care if I started going out till god knows what time (they'd probably be glad to get rid of me!), and they aren't bothered that I sit here all day and night till whatever time I want (probably because I've left school).

jellyellie: A thorough answer!

Kev: Merci Boucoup. Beaucoup rather! Damn French spelling.



Jellyellie: Indeed – well it's their turn to moan at us now: we won the Olympic bid! Now let it all out, what don't you like about the way your parents treat you as a teenager in comparison to when you were, say, 10?

Kev: It's not really much different. I still get treated like a child. My brother (who's 11 today) gets treated in the same way, if not better. He's not made to help people all the time; 'ooooh he's too little'. Well, how come those exact same words weren't said when I was his age?

Jellyellie:...and when you were his age you had to help with stuff that he doesn't do now?

Kev: Yeap.

Jellyellie: I think you'll find there's no 'a' in that word!

Kev: Yeap ;-)

Jellyellie: Typical stubborn teen!

Kev: Yeap. Oooh that really pisses me off too! 'Oh you're just a typical teenager'.

Jellyellie: Yeah me too!!! So, have we finished the interview then?

Kev: Now we have 😊

...so there we go. An interview with a REAL teenager! Yes – pure off the streets of England. Well, fresh off of my MSN list.

Forget those dreary interviews with middle-aged psychologists with sleeves full of qualifications and degrees; to get to the bottom of the whole teenage mindset all you need to do is talk to a few teens.



Isn't that amazing? You can *talk* to teenagers! But you didn't think they spoke...? Well there's proof they do and I didn't need a degree to come up with it. Try it yourself, folks. And put away those fags for god's sake, you don't need to bribe us, and definitely not with *those*.

Talk to your teenagers, talk to friends' teenagers, talk to your nephews and nieces... we don't bite. Treat us like adults: we'll appreciate it and are more likely to act responsibly.

After talking to friends with younger and/or older siblings of varying ages, I've found out that it's normally the older child who complains about being treated like a child (i.e. me). After much thought and research, I've come up with a few reasons for this:

- 1 Their parents are so used to protecting their younger child that they forget the older one has grown up and doesn't need to be treated in the same way.
- 2 The older child is around their younger sibling a lot, but desperately wants not to be a child but to be a grown up teenager. The older child may complain of being treated like a child because they genuinely believe they are being treated like a child. Or the older child may just want to rebel and remind everyone how un-cool it is to be a child, and how everyone should treat them like a big cool teenager not a little kid like their sibling. Got that?
- 3 The elder child isn't 'overly' complaining of being treated like a child, it's just that the younger child doesn't complain at all because they've grown up with the whining of their older sibling and have seen how pathetic it is.