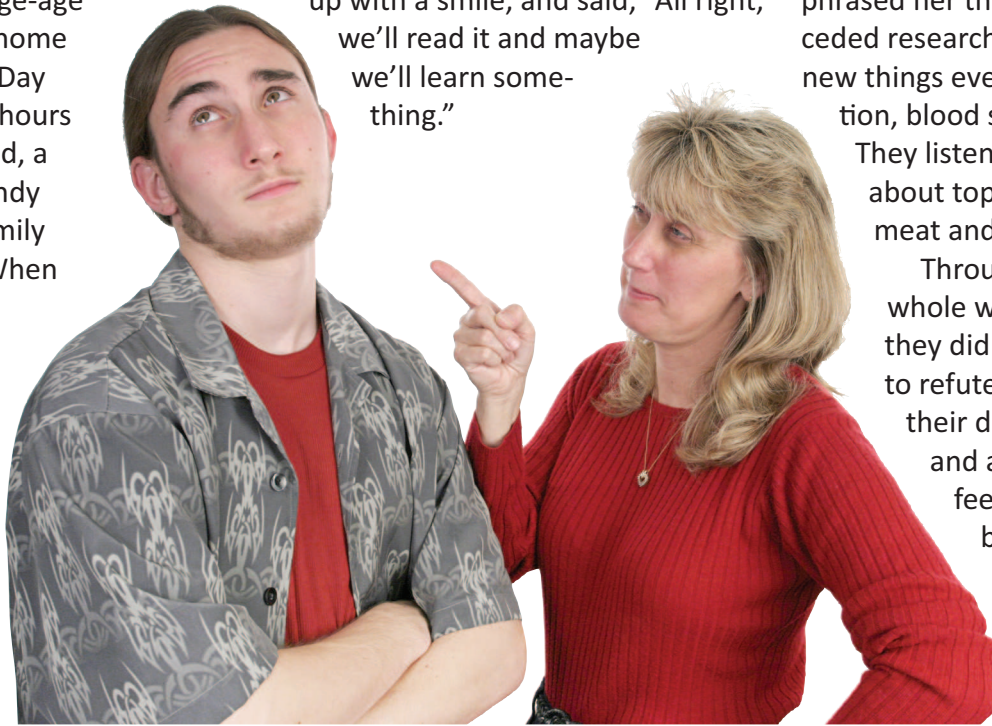


How to deal with your teen's outrageous opinions

Louise Tracy, in her book "Grounded for Life?!", tells the story of an occurrence when Della, her college-age daughter, was home for Valentine's Day weekend. Two hours after she arrived, a large box of candy given to the family disappeared. When asked about it, she answered, "It's too much sugar! I've put it away and I'll bring it out again as soon as everyone reads this paper on the

dangers of sugar."

Tracy fought down the urge to battle, clenched her teeth, came up with a smile, and said, "All right, we'll read it and maybe we'll learn something."



Tracy and her husband read Della's paper and listened to her back-up arguments. They paraphrased her thoughts and conceded researchers were finding out new things everyday about nutrition, blood sugar, and health. They listened as Della talked about topics ranging from red meat and additives.

Through the whole weekend, they did not attempt to refute anything their daughter said, and a strange feeling of benevolence developed

among the three of them. It was as if she were a friend, one they cared for deeply but whose opinions, beliefs, and values were hers to speak and own.

The day Della left, Tracy and her husband found a note on the table telling them were to find a box of canned and packaged goods Della had removed from the kitchen shelves. "Please, just read the labels and notice the placement of sugar in the list of ingredients. I'm not trying to make you stop using sugar. I just want you to know how much is unnecessarily being put into supposedly healthy food."

The next week Della sent a loving follow-up letter suggesting they read a book she was sending on the large amounts of sugar the average American now consumes compared to earlier years. By the time they finished the book, their ideas had changed, not their daughter's.

When you listen openly to your teen's position, you may free him



Parenting Tip

or her to move away from it. You may also free yourself to move from your own position.

Tracy summarizes her book's chapter on Resistance and Accep-

Resist the temptation to oppose your teen's position even when it seems extreme.

tance with the following steps for change:

- Recognize the power of words and beliefs. A person arguing for his ideas soon comes to believe them.
- Decide to reduce family conflict and resistance. Listen for points of agreement. If you don't have to be "right," there won't be an argument.
- Be alert to negative responses. Words that blame, judge, or control encourage your teen to be on the defensive and exaggerate his or her needs, feelings, and limitations.
- Take a positive stance. Note your child's knowledge, thinking and concern about the subject. Develop an interest in differing opinions. Save your other viewpoints until a later time.

ORTHODONTIST

Durk V. Irwin, D.M.D. P.C.

BRACES FOR CHILDREN & ADULTS



Pendleton

2237 SW Court Ave. dirwin@irwinorthodontics.com 541.276.7819

Hermiston

1060 W. Elm, Suite 135 541.567.2662

Initial Exam Free • 1-800-962-7038 • Se Habla Español

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