

More Power to Them?

Helping Families Work
Through Power Struggles
in the Early Teen Years



Webinar Handouts

February 6, 2018

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POST IT

5 Keys

to strong youth-parent relationships

Keep Connected is based on Search Institute's Developmental Relationship Framework, which is shown here. Each action can be done by both young people and adults in relationships. *Keep Connected* focuses on strengthening these kinds of relationships in families. In addition, other relationships also matter in young people's lives, including relationships with teachers, friends, youth leaders, mentors, and many others.

Elements

Actions

Definitions



“Show me that I matter to you.”

- **Be dependable**
- **Listen**
- **Believe in me**
- **Be warm**
- **Encourage**

Be someone I can trust.
Really pay attention when we are together.
Make me feel known and valued.
Show me you enjoy being with me.
Praise me for my efforts and achievements.



“Treat me with respect & give me a say.”

- **Respect me**
- **Include me**
- **Collaborate**
- **Let me lead**

Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
Involve me in decisions that affect me.
Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.



“Push me to keep getting better.”

- **Expect my best**
- **Stretch**
- **Hold me accountable**
- **Reflect on failures**

Expect me to live up to my potential.
Push me to go further.
Insist I take responsibility for my actions.
Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.



“Help me complete tasks & achieve goals.”

- **Navigate**
- **Empower**
- **Advocate**
- **Set boundaries**

Guide me through hard situations and systems.
Build my confidence to take charge of my life.
Stand up for me when I need it.
Put in place limits that keep me on track.



“Connect me with people & places that broaden my world.”

- **Inspire**
- **Broaden horizons**
- **Connect**

Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.
Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
Introduce me to more people who can help me grow.



Some Key Ideas

“Share power” doesn’t mean “give up” power. When we share power in our family, we respond to this unspoken request:

**“Treat me with respect
and give me a say.”**

58%
of US parents
believe sharing
power is strong in
their family.

What Does Sharing Power Involve?

Search Institute has identified four actions that share power:

- Be respectful** Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- Include me** Involve me in decisions that affect me.
- Collaborate** Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
- Let me lead** Give me chances to make decisions and lead.

Why Is It Important for Families to Share Power?

Sharing power in families helps **parenting adults** . . .

- Develop deeper, more meaningful relationships with their kids.
- Learn to trust their kids.

Sharing power in families helps **young people** . . .

- Become more confident, responsible, and motivated.
- Adjust to school transitions.
- Communicate, negotiate, and problem-solve.
- Avoid risky behaviors as they learn to make decisions.
- Be prepared to form relationships throughout life.

Sharing Power Is a Common Source of Conflict in Families

Sharing power leads to more give-and-take in relationships. But it can also lead to conflicts. Parents may have different expectations than young people about when, where, and how to share power.

For most families, conflicts over power and independence increase during the middle-school years. The good news is that the conflicts tend to even out or decline through high school. In addition, only about 5 to 15 percent of teenagers have high-conflict relationships with their parents.



Questions to Ask:

THE MAIN POINT:

Power struggles are not really a “behavior issue.” They are a relationship issue. Learning to “share power” is key to a strong parent-child relationship.

How can you turn power struggles into power sharing?

Ask yourself these questions:

When kids approach the teen years, everything seems to become a power struggle! Why? The basic answer is that they’re growing up:

- Their brains are changing. They’re starting to think differently.
- They’re trying to figure out who they are.
- They are shifting from mostly depending on others for everything toward having more responsibility and self-control.

Underneath all these changes, power struggles are signs that your relationship is changing. That’s a normal part of growing up. In the long run, it’s good. ***But it’s hard right now!***

- 1. What will help you slow down and cool down?** Take deep breath. Take a break. Don’t make it worse by escalating.
- 2. What’s behind the power struggle?** Is it an important difference of opinion? Is something major at stake (such as safety)? Is one (or both) of you tired, stressed, or upset about something else?
- 3. Is he or she right this time?** Are you holding on too tightly? Has he or she matured and can take on more responsibility? Sometimes parents hold on too tightly. It may be time to give more responsibility.
- 4. What’s the best way to share power in this instance?** Should you listen carefully, and then decide yourself? Should you offer choices? Should you negotiate a win-win? Should you let the child make the decision?
- 5. Do you need to stay firm this time?** You can listen, explain, and empathize. Then make tough decisions and maintain the needed expectations and consequences.
- 6. When can you say yes?** Saying yes when you can makes it easier to say no when you need to.
- 7. How will you keep expressing care?** You love your kids, even when you’re mad at them. They are more likely to accept decisions if they know you really listen to them and want the best for them.
- 8. What’s the big picture?** Your ultimate goal is to help your child learn and grow, including learning to negotiate and make good decisions. Sometimes we may need to renegotiate and let go so our kids can learn, even though they will make mistakes.



What Approaches Fit Your Family?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pick one area of family life where you make decisions that affect everyone. (You identified some during the session.)
2. Decide together which statement in the column labeled "The Parent's Approach" best fits how a decision about this topic is usually made in your family. Write the topic in the column "What Decisions Fit Here for Our Family?"
3. Then decide together if you'd like that decision to be made a different way (represented by a different statement in the first column). If so, draw an arrow to show how you want to move that topic to try something new.
4. Repeat the exercise with other topics as much as you have time. Do you see any patterns?

The Parent's Approach:

Explanation:

What decisions fit here for our family?

Parent has all the power.

"Do it because I said to."

Parent has all the authority. The child doesn't have a voice.

"This is why I made the decision that I made."

Parent explains the choice so the child will understand and learn.

"What you think will help me decide."

The youth has a voice that influences the parent's decision.

"Here are three choices. Which one should we do?"

The parent lets the youth decide based on choices that work for the parent.

"Let's decide this together."

The parent and youth collaborate in making a win-win decision.

"Let me help you, but it's your decision."

The parent helps the youth think through the decision, but the youth makes it.

"It's your choice. I'll stay out of it."

The youth makes the decision without input from the parent.

Different ways to share the power.

Youth has all the power.