

PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

for the adventure of family life



54_ "Sparring" - leadership in puberty

The classic kind of parenting no longer works in puberty. This means that the teaching that used to work with the child is no longer effective. Younger children need parents who have more experience than they do. After puberty, a new kind of relationship is required. Parenting becomes, so to speak, a relationship that should have new qualities so it is fruitful for everyone involved.

Young people need parents who work like a "sparring partner."

A sparring partner is a trainer in a boxing match. It offers the boxer as much resistance as possible and does as little damage as possible. Sparring means giving the youth maximum resistance when they want to do things you think are not good for them. This means you state your opinions and beliefs clearly. Saying what and how you think about something. It means being honest with yourself and expressing what you really mean. But not with the intention of educating the youth. It's a respectful exchange, like a grown-up friend asking for your opinion.

Young people have to learn to take responsibility for themselves.

This also means they have to make their own decisions. For example, if your 15-year-old son wants to go to a party, the first thing you should do is work out the details with him. Where is the party, who is coming, how many, who is in charge, how does he get there, how does he get back?

Based on this information, you should feel free to express your opinion about attending the party. Your son may not like what you say and how you feel about it, but it's important that you take yourself seriously and your son sees that.

This taking oneself seriously has a role model function for young people. They learn you can take yourself seriously and express yourself. You can say anything as long as it's not condescending, patronizing, criticizing, threatening, or pleading.

Now let the adolescent decide whether or not to go. He or she will certainly take your considerations into account when making a decision.

Being allowed to learn from mistakes

Young people need to learn from their own actions. This is the only way they can take responsibility for their lives. If it turns out the decision was wrong and the evening didn't go as expected, it is important you are there and talk to the young person about his or her bad experiences. Please don't be a know-it-all, but just as interested as you would be with a grown-up friend. "I have a feeling the party wasn't that great. Would you like to talk about it?" If the young person says no, then of course this boundary has to be respected.

Parents are the safety net especially when things go wrong.

Parents should be there as a safety net when teens make decisions that are disadvantageous to them. Young people need their parents especially when something goes wrong.

"Adolescence consists of experiments by the thousands. Maturity develops only when young people are given the opportunity to share their failures with the family. The more they are punished, lectured and criticised, the less they learn about themselves as well as about their strengths and weaknesses", says Danish family therapist Jesper Juul.

Text: Astrid Egger | www.familie.it

Source: „Pubertät - Wenn erziehen nicht mehr geht“ (“Puberty - When Education Is No Longer Possible”), Jesper Juul, Kösel Verlag