

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



Swimming against the parenting tide

Going against popular opinion, particularly when it belongs to a young person, takes some parenting steel. It helps if you are less intent on being popular with your young person and more intent on being respected.

Sometimes as a parent you need to swim against the tide of popular opinion - that is, what your kids and fellow parents think. Obviously, that takes some parenting steel.

It seems that you must do this a great deal when you are parenting [teenagers](#). You may intuitively know what's best for them ('*You are too young to go to that party! It's just too risky*') yet you risk an argument, or not being spoken to for a week if you stand your ground. It's easy to give into young people to maintain your relationship, and to be liked.

But you don't always need to be liked by your young person. However you do need to be respected. Aim for respect, not to be liked, as they won't always approve of your decisions.

Here's the rub.

Respect often comes later.....much later when they are older and understand that you were acting in their best interests. Respect is earned by treating young people respectfully; but also acting in their best interests, which often means swimming against the tide of popular opinion.

Here are 4 ideas to help you swim against the tide and maintain the respect you need to influence young people:

- 1. Double up:** If your partner is available, then you need to present a united front on many issues with young people, particularly around risk-taking activities and relationships. It's plain hard work alone. Single parents need to draw strength from friends, relatives and other colleagues.
- 2. Call in the troops:** If in doubt, speak to other parents and find out what they think and what they are doing with their young people. It's easier to stand your ground when you know what other parents think and do. Kids use 'the divide and conquer' principle a lot when they want to manipulate their parents.
- 3. Refer to a respected adult:** Sometimes it's useful to call on a respected ally in your child's life. Often they'll

listen to others but not to you, even though the message is the same. Even if you can't call on a respected adult ally in person, you can bring them into the picture saying, "What do you think your uncle would say?" Most of the time, they'll know!

4. Use one point communication: When teens want to engage in an argument, rather than a conversation, or they want to continue a fight way after negotiation has finished, use one point communication to get your message across. That is, don't respond and don't make eye contact with them. Looking away robs them of their power. I'm not suggesting we harm your relationship but you do need to use assertive communication techniques to help you stand your ground.

Remember; aim to be respected by teenagers and children as an adult who has their long-term best interests at heart, not necessarily to be liked, which is short-term and not always the wisest strategy.

