

WHEN TEENS FORGET THEIR TRAINING

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Why is it that a mother told my wife that her teenage kids leave plates all around the house and she continuously has to go around picking them up? What's wrong with this picture? Can you ever redeem what is lost?

Let's look at the first scenario. I would want to ask the question whether the children were trained to take responsibility in infancy. Secondly, I would suggest that we are looking at an indulgent mother who then complains about picking up the plates and taking them to the kitchen. Why aren't the kids returning their own plates? I would go to a dictionary and look very closely at the meaning of the word 'slave'. I would turn over one more page and look at the meaning of 'slow-witted'.

What's wrong with this picture? Mothers were not made to go around picking up after their children, especially teenagers. Now I know that some teens become indolent, but I believe that if they have been trained to pull their weight in the home from an early age and do their fair share of chores, this would not happen. To say that their teens won't cooperate is more a reflection on the parent than it is on the child. So long as the teen is living under your roof and not paying the bills you have the right to make some demands on their lives. By doing these tasks for them you are helping them create poor attitudes. Then you might complain about their negative attitudes.

The third part of this scenario is to ask if you can ever redeem what is lost. I would first have to ask if the training was lost or never took place in the beginning. Let's answer this from two different angles. It is essential that parents teach their children to be responsible by allotting them tasks and chores from toddler-hood and up. Children will rise to our expectations, so keep the expectations high, but realistic. Most kids believe that if they whine enough a parent will do the task to avoid having to listen to them. By giving in and doing it themselves a parent has lost ground and the child knows how to win the next round.

Can you get a teenager who won't do anything to change? Most certainly! Call for a family meeting and say that from now on the work around the house will be divided into however many bodies there are in the home. Everyone has to cooperate or there will be consequences. Ensure that you have worked out the consequences before you have the meeting and have them written down. Grounding, less or no time watching TV, privileges withdrawn for using the computer for a given period are all effective measures. Any teen with a car can have their keys confiscated until they are compliant. Extra chores can be allocated for failure to obey like tidying the garage or cleaning out closets.

It is always possible to get compliance, but you have to be strong and consistent. When there is an inconvenience applied or more work is given ultimately the teen (or younger sibling) will realize that being a team member pays off. Our children need to be equipped with the skills to run their own home in the future. Their future spouse will be very grateful, too.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.