

Is the battle worth having?



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**Cooperative Extension
Education Resource**

By: The University of Minnesota Cooperative Extension

It takes a lot of skill and practice to manage the conflict we have with our teens. The most important skill to learn is deciding if the battle is worth having! To decide ask yourself:

- Is my teen's health or safety at risk?
- Is this about a deeply held value of our family?
- Is the behavior violating an established household rule?
- Do the benefits to my teen outweigh the negatives?

If the answers to these four questions are no, the battle is not worth having! Save your time and effort for those battles that affect your teen's well being. Some other skills are:

- Managing anger – learn how to calm down in positive ways
- Setting boundaries – have only a few ground rules and stick to them. Teens, just like younger children, need reminding
- Knowing your teen well enough to have realistic expectations – this only comes from spending time with your child from early on and continuing through the teen years
- Creativity – struggles and conflict are minimized when you and your teen creatively cooperate

Many parents have been taught to hold in anger rather than how to express it productively and safely. Anger is not a “bad emotion” but expressing anger in ways that hurt us and others physically and verbally is not OK. When parents and teens are angry, they don't think very well and can't solve problems effectively. When they take time to calm down, they can begin to think more clearly and can focus on resolving the conflict.

Sometimes parent/teen conflict can become a serious issue. Sometimes it is difficult to know if the conflict you are dealing with is normal teen behavior or a symptom of something serious. Parents need to know there are many professional helpers in the community: school counselors, social workers, mental health centers and private counselors and therapists. It is not a sign of weakness to seek professional help but rather a sign of strength. It shows parents care enough to work through difficulties and help themselves and their teens. It also models the adult skill of interdependency.

