



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Five things that upset kids about their parents

Our kids love us, but that doesn't stop them from being upset at some of the things we do.

Here are the five things that seem to bother kids the most about how we treat them.

1. **Lack of attention.** Kids of any age want to be noticed and generally attention from us is what they are after. This is most obvious with younger children, who will do almost anything to keep us interacting with them. Teens can be more difficult to interpret, since they still need and want our engagement but on their terms, not ours. Kids get bothered when we routinely place work, our spouse, social commitments, hobbies, or anything else in front of them. They want to be our top priority, even if at times they shouldn't.
2. **Inconsistency.** Kids may say they don't like or need our rules but they don't really mean it. What bothers them is when our expectations are ambiguous and applied in an unpredictable manner. Youngsters complain that they don't know what will get them in trouble, since their parents behave in ways that seem more impulsive than thoughtful. This results in anxious kids who behave poorly. Since they cannot reliably predict their parents' responses, toddlers yell and scream and teens text while driving.
3. **Rules without Reasons.** Perhaps as a backlash to the perceived permissiveness of previous generations, many parents are assuming a more authoritarian role with their children. Kids find that approach very aggravating. Parents shouldn't confuse understanding with agreement. It's not necessary for your child to concur with everything you do, but you should help them

understand the rationale behind your thinking. Have them restate back to you the reasoning behind your expectations.

4. **Personal Parental Problems.** Many kids live in homes with parents who abuse drugs or alcohol, suffer from severe depression or other mental disorders, have serious financial problems or conduct secret extramarital affairs. Kids don't understand this stuff and parents make it worse by trying to shield their children from such issues.

Youngsters in such families live in an unstable and tumultuous world. They have little understanding of why their parents are acting in hurtful and harmful ways. Kids frequently try to protect parents from themselves, efforts that are inevitably unsuccessful. Internet affairs have become the latest worry for kids, as teens become acutely aware of their parents' marital infidelities.

5. **Over protectiveness.** Almost all kids feel they are capable of doing more things than their parents allow. Fueled by the images of 24-hour cable bad-news reports, parental anxieties have produced a generation of indoor obese kids whose outdoor activities are under the constant surveillance of GPS systems and parental text reminders.

While the facts indicate the American kids are growing up in the safest time in history, it just doesn't feel that way to most parents. Kids resent being over supervised and under respected. They want their parents to lighten up and allow them to experience life and learn how to independently deal with problems.

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