

## **Teens and Parents only *Hear what they See***

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Teens see and do what their parents do. Regardless of what the parents say, their offspring teen does what they do, not what they say. The same applies to parents. Parents only see what their teens do, not what they say, regardless of their teen's explanations.

Parents often have very general explanations and directions of what their teen should do. These generalities leave the teens confused. In addition, as great as those generalities may sound, yet the teens do only what they see from their parents. Actions speak louder than words. When parents do not seem to do what they tell their teens to do, does that mean that they are hypocrites and don't care about their offspring? Of course not. But unfortunately, often it seems that way. As a result, teens cannot help but feel hurt and express their frustration, "My parents don't care about me!"

Interestingly, it is a two way street. It is not only the teens who look at their parents' actions, but also the parents who look at their teens' actions. Teens often have what seem to be for them logical answers and explanations for what they do and want to do. Yet their parents look at what the teens do rather than what they say. If the parents think that their teen is saying one thing and doing something else, they see their teen as unreliable and irresponsible. They lose trust in their teen. Yes, action speaks louder than words. It is no wonder that the parents start distrusting their teen and treat them as children who have not grown up. Even worse, parents begin thinking that their teen is being intentionally mean and malicious.

It is obvious that the parent-teen relationship could sour very quickly and easily. So what to do about it? The burden of giving the other a chance falls on both parents and teens. Parents need to give their teen a chance to express themselves. The teens also need to give their parents the opportunity to express themselves. And what would that expression be about? It would be about the fact that they love each other and want the best for each other. First and foremost, their intent needs to be shared and trust built in their relationship. Once there is trust built, then when they see each other's actions not matching their words, instead of beginning with the feeling of betrayal and being lied to, they can begin with the sense of trust. Both parents and teens can begin their conversations by seeing the good in each other first, and then build on that trust.