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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## How to Get Along with Your Teenager<sup>1</sup>

*Rick Kingsley and Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Have you ever felt that every time you talk to your teenager it turns into an argument? Do you ever wonder why your teen is being so difficult? These are common complaints of parents of teenagers. These parents don't understand how a loving child can change so drastically.

Relax. First of all, most parents deal with this. Second, as your children enter their teens, their perception of the world around them is no longer limited to the one once explained by you. Their brain is now capable of complex reasoning, and things that once went unquestioned now must be decided upon for themselves. Your children are also exploring belief systems and ideologies different from that they were raised on. This may explain why they hang around with peers whom you don't approve of, as well as why they challenge your decisions a great deal more often than before.

Teens are beginning to function as individuals, and the heated arguments that are generated are either an effort to grasp what you believe or gain some independence. This tension will die down as they grow up and become more confident in who they are and what they believe. And remember, though it may seem that your child couldn't care less

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2. Rick Kingsley, undergraduate student, and Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, and Executive Producer, Family Album Radio, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

about your opinion (you know—the rolling eyes routine), most teens say that their parents are still the deciding factor in what they believe and who they will eventually become.

Think of all the adults you know that say they swore they would never be like their parents, only to become parents and find themselves being just like their parents. Think about it.

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