

How To Make Curfew Rules For Your Teen Work Without Arguing

from the American Counseling Association

With summer here, most teens will be pushing to have the freedom to stay out later. That issue can lead to major disagreements, but there are ways to eliminate the conflict and get yourself more sleep at the same time. And all it takes is an alarm clock and a few simple agreed-upon rules.

Teens' desire for more responsibility and freedom is a natural part of the maturing process. So start by allowing your teen the responsibility of deciding a reasonable time to be back home. You can set an outside limit, one based on your teen's age and proven record of responsibility.

Next come the rules. Make it clear that exceptions to curfew times need to be cleared with you first. Special late events, or places requiring extra travel, do occur. In such cases, that extra time request requires details about what's happening, where it is, who's involved, who's driving, a phone number you can call and similar information.

You and your teen must also decide on the consequences for returning home after the curfew time. Your teen should realize that the time chosen represents a commitment and is a way of showing an adult level of responsibility. Violating that commitment should carry consequences that mean something.

Another rule is that only serious emergencies, ones requiring you to come to the rescue (an auto breakdown, an intoxicated driver), are acceptable curfew-breaking excuses. A call reporting losing track of time or just forgetting isn't acceptable. If your teenager has set an 11:30 curfew time, an 11:31 return is too late and the consequences should kick in.

And that alarm clock? That's so you can get a decent night's sleep. Set it to the time your teen said he or she would be home. Then put it outside your bedroom door and go to bed without worrying. When your teen comes home before the curfew time, he or she shuts off the alarm and you just continue sleeping.

But if it's a late return, that alarm goes off. That ends any arguments about what time your teenager "really" returned. It's a late return and agreed-upon consequences happen. Don't make a big deal of it, and give your teen another chance, using the same rules, to improve upon his or her curfew performance.

You'll soon find that curfews without arguing really can work.

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words: 391