

Who is in Control? Control vs. Leadership

Much of the conflict between parents and their teenage children is about a struggle for control. A parent's need to control their child is a natural one—when a child is born it is weak and parents have the incredible task of raising this human being to be able to function successfully in the world.

Think of your child as he or she was growing up, and all the hopes and ambitions you had for him or her. Perhaps you wanted to raise a child with certain characteristics you particularly value. You might have had an idea of what a 'successful' member of society looks like, and tried to guide your child in that direction. You may have felt pressured by what other parents did. Whatever the case is, a parent's need to control and influence the course their children take comes from a fierce and powerful sense of duty—and love.

1. Your values have influenced the direction in which you try to guide your teen. List some of these values.

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2. Your parents' values influenced how they parented you and tried to guide you. Name some of those values that caused conflict between you and your parents.

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As children move through the developmental stages, their need for independence increases, and so does their resistance to being controlled. This is especially strong as children approach the teen years.

3. Your child wants to experiment with his/her individuality. Name some of their behaviours that cause conflict between you.

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It can be helpful to remember that this exploration is a stage that will pass. Our values will be modified by our children to fit their time and place and personality. Didn't we do the same?