

“Top 10” Parent-Teen Empathy Barriers	Steps to Overcome
<p>#1-ParentalHidden Agenda: <i>It is instinctual for parents to concurrently contemplate their own agendas while listening to their teens, such as a desire to change, correct, teach, advise, problem-solve, or contract with their teen.</i></p>	<p>Parents must learn to temporarily, but genuinely and wholly, suspend their concerns and agendas, while listening empathically.</p>
<p>#2-Parental Blame/Judgment: <i>When teens present their version of a situation, especially one in which they experienced negative consequences, it is natural for parents to look for and comment upon sources of error or flawed thinking or behavior in teens.</i></p>	<p>Parents must learn to suspend formulating judgments, identifying short-comings or assigning blame or while listening empathically.</p>
<p>#3-Parental Distress: <i>When teens present their version of a situation, especially one that involved conflict with another family member, including a parent or sibling, parents naturally begin having their own emotional reaction and may inherently experience increasing levels of defensiveness and distress.</i></p>	<p>Parents must learn to refrain from interpreting teen reports personally and avoid “taking the bait” that teen’s may confer in the form of provocative or “snarky” remarks.</p>
<p>#4-Parental Insincerity: <i>Teens often exhaust and overwhelm their parents. As teens re lay their sense of injustice, entitlement, or seemingly distorted perspective, it is often difficult for parents to listen openly and remain focused solely on genuine understanding and acceptance.</i></p>	<p>Parents should only engage in empathic listening when they feel physically and emotionally refreshed and capable of genuine understanding and acceptance. The genuineness of the parent’s intent is the most pivotal ingredient to the teen’s receptivity.</p>
<p>#5-Insufficient Time: <i>Families are busy, with most days packed with “to dos” and rare “down time” for simply relating and sharing, especially feelings.</i></p>	<p>Parents should request a scheduled, at least weekly, appointment with their teen, on a recurring basis, as well as whenever needed, during which parent and teen agree to give one another their undivided attention.</p>
<p>#6-Insufficient Energy: <i>Families are busy and often energy depleted.</i></p>	<p>Parents should attempt to approach their teens and communicate with them around difficult topics, when and only when all parties are rested, fed, and receptive.</p>
<p>#7-Teen Escalation: <i>Particularly with chronically contentious topics, teens may become rapidly and intensely agitated, when the subject is broached by parents, even in an ideal manner.</i></p>	<p>Despite doing everything possible to set the stage optimally and use ideal approaches, teens might become too reactive to have productive exchanges. When parents sense teens are ramping up, approaching the “point of no return,” they should abort their intervention and look for a more workable moment in the future.</p>
<p>#8-Teen Resistance: <i>Particularly with chronically contentious topics, teens may refuse to engage with parents, and either remain mute or walk away.</i></p>	<p>Despite doing everything possible to set the stage optimally and use ideal approaches, teens might refuse to engage in productive exchanges. When parents sense teens digging in their heels or when they withdraw or walk away, parents should avoid the urge to continue a pursuit. Instead, parents should abort their intervention and look for a more workable moment in the future.</p>
<p>#9-Distractions: <i>Siblings, pets, electronics, phone calls, friends can disrupt and derail empathic conversations and productive conflict resolution efforts.</i></p>	<p>Parents should attempt to meet with their teen “one on one,” ideally away from the house. There should be an agreement that all electronics are turned off and neither parent nor teen is permitted to answer emails, calls or texts, during empathic communications.</p>
<p>#10-Parental Projection: <i>It is instinctual for parents to project their own inferences or biases onto their teen. So, too, parents are prone to make assumptions about their teen, based on past experiences.</i></p>	<p>Parents must train themselves to refrain from making inferences or interpreting their teen’s motives, while listening empathically. They must actively will themselves to avoid making assumptions or “reading into” their teen’s report of an experience, but instead just understand and accept it, “as is.”</p>