

Building the tool box: Yes but no but; Levey and Orland's

For most children the word 'NO ' is the most powerful trigger in your house. So, it makes sense to try not to use the word and have another way of talking to your child that will help them to be in control of the rules and the consequences. This will feel very counter intuitive, and sound a bit strange at first but it is a good strategy to use with teens and older children, over 5 years plus.

The first goal is to NOT SAY NO. we do this by saying, you guessed it, YES. It doesn't matter what your child asks for, however preposterous, rather than saying no, or giving a perfectly logical explanation for why it just can't happen, your answer is

'I love you to be able to do....'

But, and it is the bit where they must take responsibility for their own parenting,

'you need to go away and work out how it can happen'

This sounds easy to say, but first of all you need to control your own need to say no, plus you need to control your own need to tell your child the answer. It doesn't matter how long it takes for them to come back to you with an answer, it may take moments, days or never. You have left the solution in their hands not yours, and you have left them to set the rules.

You first thought is that your child won't do this, well that's fine, your answer was yes, and you can wait them out to give an answer. When your child does come back with an answer, the chances are that you won't feel that it's enough, again, don't give them the answer, or tell them how to do it, you must be positive

'that's a great start...I just need a bit more detail about...'

But remember, if they come back with a clear plan, even if you don't want them to do what they've asked to do you need to let it happen.

If they then don't stick to their own rules, you can address this with them later because it was their plan laid down.

The best way to do this is to get your child to write their plan down, they can do it on school on paper, or use a tablet or phone. Once the rules are agreed it's a good plan to write them down and make sure everyone has a copy. The best way to do this with a teen is to text it to them, that way they have no excuse when they have set a curfew of 10 and they don't come back till 11.

This strategy works well as a replacement for grounding. When your child does something that involves breaking the rules, such as staying out late. Rather than grounding, you can tell them that you really want them to still go out with their friends, and that they need to tell you how they are going to help you to trust them again. They can't go out again until they have this written up, which means that they ground themselves and are in charge of how long the grounding lasts.

This is a hard technique to use and takes some practice, so maybe give it a go on something you would have said yes to anyway, just to practice. Of course, your child is going to think that you've gone mad, and that you are being confrontational at first, and so initially they will fight this strategy, but persist patiently and calmly, and above all do not fall into the trap of giving them the answer.

