

Using Good and Bad Consequences to Teach Our Children

I value any opportunity that I have to speak into the relationships of parents with their teenagers and I look forward to earning this right with more and more families in the future. One issue that seems to come up very often is the need to connect a teenager's *privileges* with their *responsibilities*. Often, by the time a parent comes to me with an issue that is affecting their home, their teen's privileges are being treated as *rights*, and the parent doesn't realize the leverage and the responsibility that they have in helping their child manage teenage responsibilities in preparation for adult responsibilities.

In these situations I usually recommend that, first, the parents sit down together and list all their teenager's responsibilities. This list could include everything from respect and curfew to personal hygiene. Secondly, I suggest that they also list all the teen's privileges—everything beyond basic food, clothing, and shelter. (No item bought with your money, using your electricity, etc. is completely theirs.) The third step is to associate each of the child's privileges with a responsibility. The final step in the plan would be to sit down with their teen and explain the list, praising them for where they have shown themselves responsible and informing them of responsibilities that need to be better met if they are to keep or regain certain privileges.

While this equation—privileges awarded because of responsibility— does not necessarily target your teenager's heart, it is a good way to bring order back to what can often become an out of control situation. Keep in mind that consequences will escalate in severity for your child as they gain more independence and more adult responsibility. It is better to create manageable consequences now before your teenager's fate is out of your hands.

1. List Responsibilities
2. List Privileges
3. Associate Privileges & Responsibilities
4. Discuss the list with your teenager