



Adolescence is a time for exploring individuality. It's natural for your adolescent to seek independence and their own identity. Giving adolescents age-appropriate freedom builds independence and confidence and can actually encourage a healthier connection between them and their parents as they grow into confident, productive young adults. Adolescents who are over-protected can have diminished social confidence and experience difficulty separating from their parents at the appropriate age. It's important for us to use this transition time to teach the skills that will guide our children as they become independent and successful individuals.

Parents have the responsibility of providing safety and boundaries for their children, but when is it time to loosen those boundaries and allow them to have more independence? It will be different for each child, but involving them in the process is a great place to start.

Adolescents sometimes complain that they “don't get to do what they want” or “are treated like a baby.” Helping them to maturely state their case and participate in the decision making process helps them to feel more in control and helps to build resilience. The following “Right to Appeal” process provides a framework for dealing with those situations when parents and adolescents differ in their opinions about readiness for independence. When your adolescent asks to participate in an activity or have a freedom that he/she previously didn't have (like go to a party, join a club, walk to a friend's house in a nearby neighborhood), it may be difficult to know if they are ready. If they refuse to talk or become emotional or angry, they may not be ready. If they are able to follow the steps of the Right to Appeal process outlined below, they deserve a consideration.

RIGHT TO APPEAL – Before you begin to use this process, it's important to set up the ground rules for the process. Find a location to have a “grown-up” conversation with your adolescent. Take a walk, go to a coffee shop, have a meal at a restaurant—choose a place that is away from home and your regular routine. In order for this process to be effective, all of the adults in your home need to be involved and in agreement, so be sure to include everyone in this discussion. Review the steps of the appeal process that your child should follow when he/she disagrees with a decision you have made regarding their independence.

Step 1: Set up a time to calmly and maturely state your disagreement to parent(s).

Step 2: State the reasons you believe you deserve to have a specific freedom or responsibility.

Step 3: Listen calmly to parent's reasons for having the rule that you disagree with.

Step 4: Provide mature and thoughtful rebuttal to parent's reasons.

Step 5: Allow parent(s) time to discuss/think about your appeal request. Set up a time to talk about their decision.

Step 6: Maturely listen to and accept parents' decision without objection. Their job is to care for you and keep you safe. You may not understand or agree with their decision right now, but in order for this process to work, they must have the final word.

Step 7: If your parents did not accept your appeal, work with them to determine what you can do to move toward achieving your goal the next time a similar situation comes up. Is there something you can do to show them that you are ready for this level of responsibility? Is there an age you need to be in order to gain this privilege? When will it be appropriate to have this discussion again?

If they did accept your appeal, make sure you follow through with your proposed behavior. Remember, when you demonstrate consistently responsible behavior, the more likely you will be to have successful future appeals that will give you more control in your life.