Top 8 Teen Buttons

Instant Problem Solving/Instant Advice
Often when teenagers tell you how bad their day was, how their friends hate them etc, they don’t actually want you to have a solution ready. Often NO solution is needed and all your teenager wants is that you do listen and validate how they feel at this moment. Quick solutions can make your teen feel patronized or belittled.

Over-Identification with your teen’s struggles
Statements like ‘I know how you feel’, or ‘we two are just so similar’, ‘OMG this sounds sooo horrible’ should be used rarely and with great caution. They tend to trigger a defensive response because of a sense that their identity is somewhat under threat. A teen might withdraw in order to preserve their own sense of self, about which they are particularly sensitive at that age.

Using Cliches
As soon as your teenager hears ‘when I was your age…’ or ‘as long as you live under my roof…’ s/he will instantly go deaf. Get rid of this button or your teen will continue to switch off his listening button.

Talking in Chapters/Justifying/Preaching
This refers to some parents’ habit of instead of making a simple request, i.e. ‘please clean this table now’, to go on to tell a long story of how you have every right to ask this of them, that you are working long hours and need help getting the home chores done, everyone else is doing their bit etc. While this is all likely to be true, your teen most likely knows all this already and will stop listening.

Labeling
Telling your teenager that they are ‘lazy’ or that they ‘must obviously like living like a pig’ is called labeling someone. Oftentimes teenagers are really hurt by such pronouncements, though they might never admit it. Feeling hurt they will turn away from you, disconnect and stop listening.

Trying to scare your teen into cooperation or good behaviours
Statements like ‘you will never get a job if you don’t study more, ‘you will never get a girlfriend/boyfriend/friend if you carry on with this attitude’, ‘you will become a drug addict and end up in jail’, are all probably heartfelt concerns of a parent in that moment, but such statements are usually experienced as mean, scary, or highly exaggerated by your teen and they will switch off listening.

Bringing up the past repeatedly
No-one likes having their past mistakes or wrong-doings brought up again and again. It gives your teenager a sense that redemption, forgiveness and moving on is impossible in your family, and besides of the hopelessness or anger such reminiscences tend to stir up, your teen is also likely to disconnect from you and stop relating and listening.

Laughing about or Questioning Teen Experimentation
It’s tempting to laugh at strange hairdo’s, weird get-ups, or hours spent in front of mirrors, and to share your mirth with friends or family in front of your teen. But it is hurtful and will create distance. Resist the temptation if you want your young person to still listen to you.