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**The Most Well-Kept Secrets: What Your Teens Like Most and**

**Least**

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You are reassured frequently that once your kids leave their teen years, they will look back and thank you for all of the things you made them do and things you wouldn't allow them to do. "Wait until they are older!" you are reassured, and then they will thank you. Well, I have a different idea. How about we approach this topic a little differently? Let's say you had a crystal ball and could go into the future and hear what your twenty-somethings have to say about your parenting during their teen years. Would you look into that crystal ball? Well, I am quite sure that I hear a resounding "yes," so I am going to act as the crystal ball.

Over the past twenty plus years, I have been working with teens. I see them in my office. I do presentations for them and their parents. I listen carefully to what they have to say about your parenting. I know that you are all just trying to do the best that you can for your sometimes hapless teens. I am going to let you in on their well-kept secrets and what they like and dislike most about your parenting.

Bear with me as I go over the most frequently heard comments. Twenty plus years is a long time, and I have quite a treasure trove of information at my fingertips. So here, in no special order, is a list of points that teens like the least about your parenting:

**1. They dislike when you contact their teachers without letting them know.** They tell me that they feel embarrassed when the teacher asks them to stay after class to talk about "your mother's message." They describe feeling blindsided and they wish you would have either not contacted the teacher or at least would have told them that you were going to so that they wouldn't be caught off-guard. Teens are particularly self-conscious, so being caught off-guard is humiliating for them.

**2. They don't find it funny when you share their little secrets with your adult friends because you think that they are cute and no big deal.** To teens, their "little secrets ' are a big deal. If, for example, your daughter tells you that she has a crush on your friend's son and then you share this playfully with your friend, you are in deep trouble. You are then going to have to do some repair work on the trust issue. Remember to keep your lips sealed and you'll get more information.

**3. Teens get very upset if you talk about them as if they aren't there.** Although they may not want to be the center of attention, they want their presence to be acknowledged. You could talk about them as if they weren't there when they were non-verbal, but not now. OK?

**4. Your teens do not enjoy listening to you brag about them.** It is embarrassing and they often tell me that it makes them feel like they are all about their accomplishments nothing else. And, remember, those test grades belong to your teen not to you.

**5. Please don't compare them to their siblings.** They don't like walking through life and the teenage years with a label like

"the smart one," "the pretty one," or "the lazy one." We can all relate to this, right?

**6. They say that you expect them to do things wrong.** Look, this is what they tell me. I'm not making this up. They sometimes wish that teenage and trouble didn't both begin with the letter "T," because they are already used together way too often. Give this some thought. I think that the teens may be right about this one.

**7. They get furious when you talk negatively about their friends.** This is not because you don't like their friends, but because they see their friends as a direct reflection of themselves. So it therefore follows in teen logic that if you are judging your teen's friend, then you are judging your teen.

AND

**8. They get very distressed when you ask them to do things repeatedly.** They say that if you ask them once or twice, then they will be less likely to feel the urge to resist and act out by stalling.

Certainly, you didn't think that I would just fill you in on what the teens dislike about you now, did you? I also want to fill you in on what they will tell you that they love about you when they are a bit older and less self-conscious.

1. They love when you notice their small accomplishments. They are watching you and they catch you beaming with pride.

2. They love that you are among the few people in the world who care about all of the little details of their lives.

3. They love when you remember their favorite meal, food and/or fill in the blank here.

4. Oh yes, don't kid yourselves. They love when you dote on them when they are sick. AND

5. They love when you are pleased and seem to be enjoying life. You see they want happy parents.

I'll be back to you with more secrets that the teens keep. Please let me know if it is helpful to be aware of the ones that I've just shared with you.

**Follow Barbara Greenberg on Twitter:** [**www.twitter.comltalkingteenage**](http://www.twitter.comltalkingteenage/)

1. With which points given by the author do you agree?
2. With which points do you disagree?
3. List your own top five things you like and top five things you dislike about your parents’ parenting.