

FOUR TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE TWEEN YEARS

Kids transitioning from the fifth grade to the sixth grade can be a harsh smack of reality for parents and kids. Kids transition from innocent children to the things of teens—thus the need for the *tween* category. Parents aren't ready for the issues their kids bring home. I know I wasn't either when my kids were that age. I was shocked when it happened and thought it would pass in a couple of weeks. But no, once the tween years slide in your child's life they aren't going anywhere. They will morph into the teen years. The childhood years are sneaking out the backdoor.

This is not all bad. It's part of God's plan for our kids to grow and mature and become the fabulous people He created them to be. But we need to be ready.

1. **Prepare, don't hide.** Many parents take the approach that tries to protect their kids from anything ungodly. Hold on before you delete my blog and move on to the next. I believe parents need to protect their kids from what they are not capable of dealing with. However, we also need to teach them to deal with the temptations and issues that come into their lives. We need to teach them it's wrong to cheat but not to label the friend who tempts them to cheat a cheater. We need to teach them that everyone does not have the same values and that's why they say bad words. We need to let our kids know that not every child has a loving home and that's why some kids are unkind.
2. **Teach them what to do if. . .** I've often heard first responders or military personnel explain how they way they handled a life-threatening emergency or rescue. They did what they trained thousands of hours to do. When the situation arose they knew what to do almost without thinking. Their training kicked in. Teach your kids what to do if someone tempts them to disobey the teacher, be unkind to another child, or lie to you. Then when the temptation comes they are ready. Information and preparation are our kids' best defense against what the world will throw at them.
3. **Update these situations at age appropriate levels.** Stay at step ahead of what you think your child will need because they're probably there already.
4. **Stay calm and carry on.** Yes, really. No matter what your child (even your seven-year-old) tells you, stay calm and carry on. Calmly listen without a hint of interrupting, then follow up with questions. "How do you think that will work?" "Have you thought about this or that?" And yes, while you will need to be the last word on most subjects, by staying calm you are setting the tone for your communication now and way into the future.

I know it's easy to believe your child will never make a decision you don't agree with, but she will. The tween years will usher in ample opportunities for this. A little preparation for you and your child will make this season less stressful for both of you.

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