

10 Ways to Infuriate a Teenager

**Parents, mentors and teachers take note
– teenagers soak up absolutely everything...**

It doesn't matter how noble the intention, oldies often get it wrong when communicating with teenagers.

Of course, this is not new. We've been making mistakes in this regard since the beginning of time. It's just that these days we have the ability to document them better and hopefully learn to avoid some of the 'danger phrases' that tick teens off.

Dr John Irvine, a respected child psychologist and author, conducted a quick straw poll at a private secondary school in Brisbane in early 2009. The results to his questioning are not meant to be cast-in-stone, just an observational snapshot that's worth pondering over.

He asked hundreds of young people to share the top nagging remarks that parents, teachers and other significant adult role models should avoid at all costs, or at the very least, should phrase in another, more sensitive, respectful way.

Just outside the Top 10 list were old favourites like "turn the music down"; "we'll talk about it later"; "got any homework?" and "please do something with your hair."

TOP 10 TEEN TURN-OFFS

10. *Don't talk with your mouth full.*
9. *I don't care who made the mess, clean it up!*
8. *Not now.*
7. *Don't you ever think of anyone but yourself?*
6. *If I were you...*
5. *Stand up straight.*
4. *Of course I trust you, but...*
3. *We'll see.*
2. *When I was your age...*
1. *No.*

Okay, it's funny, but if you find yourself nodding somewhat guiltily as you read these, then perhaps it's time you modified your messages and the tone you use to convey them.

Pressing all the wrong buttons.

Of course, it's not all one way traffic. According to the Savannah Family Institute that helps parents deal with difficult teenagers in the US, the most common teenage rants that 'wind up' parents, guardians and mentors do so through frustration and trying to make the adult feel guilty.

Often they also back up what they say with rolled eyes, a snarled lip or by using a whiny voice. Mostly it's just an idle threat or angry observation that passes quickly. However, if adults are worried that there may be more to it than just a rant, professional advice should be sought.

"We've now become this 'no fault' community where adults are scrambling over each other not to take the blame for anything," maintains Henman.

Perpetuating learned behaviour.

Yet it's not just young people who have a self-focussed attitude, argues Glyn Henman, CEO of youth mentoring organisation Young Life Australia. "It's today's adults who have let this situation manifest and who perpetuate this 'poor me' and 'all about me' thinking."

"The pervading view is that just about everything must be somebody else's fault, because it can't be mine. Then

some of us wonder where teenagers get their attitude from? In many cases they get it from us adults."

Actions have consequences. Inaction has even more.

Doing nothing doesn't make a problem go away... it just makes the core issues fester and get worse. Actions are often in fact, reactions, and it's worth remembering that in today's time-poor world, parents are spending less and less quality time with their children.

A recent study from the US suggests that teenagers with far too much unstructured free time and a lack of responsible adult role modelling are at the highest risk of getting into serious trouble. Much higher than being poor, belonging to a minority group, or coming from a single parent household.

And if you really want to infuriate a teenager, tell them what they can't do, or what they should do. "The best way to treat teens," says Glyn Henman of Young Life, "is not to put them into a box or give them a label. Teenagers are emotionally fragile, so calling a kid lazy often subconsciously encourages them to be more so. And constant criticism won't encourage them to lift their game either... it just destroys their optimism and self-belief in being able to do so."

Ultimately, it all comes down to treating teenagers with respect. They may not yet have the life experience, maturity, or wisdom of most adults. But they deserve the chance to be supported along the rocky road of getting there.

Sources: 'A handbook for happy families' Dr John Irvine 2008; Savannah Family Institute 2008; additional research April 2009; Glyn Henman, CEO Young Life Australia. Author: Philip Jenkinson.

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Fundraising Banquet a winner!



Young Life's annual National Office and Ryde area banquet was held on May 15, attracting a record 158 people. It was uplifting, inspiring, and great fun too! Reinforcing the event's theme 'The Way Forward', CEO, Glyn Henman, shared his vision of increasing engagement within existing communities and opening up new areas over the remainder of the year and beyond.

A number of young people shared their experience of positive change, Tim Pickles entertained everyone with the auction, and dozens of raffle prizes were won including a fantastic Saeco espresso coffee machine. The North Ryde Golf Club was full of smiles and many valuable dollars were raised on the night.

Think long term, act right now.

Message from the CEO Glyn Henman

The broad charitable sector is obviously hurting, but overall trends into the immediate future remain unclear, which makes short-term forecasting extremely difficult.

Anecdotal evidence from Pro Bono Australia however, suggests that charitable groups with “high ideals” are suffering more from the recession than others centred more on “physically saving lives”.

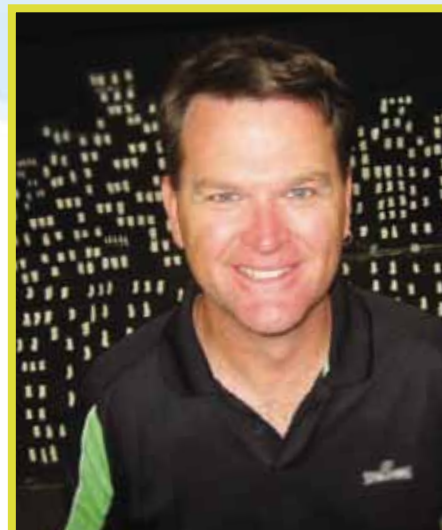
At the end of the day we are who we are – we don’t save lives. Well, not directly anyway. We’re not the firey saving a house, or an ambo at the bottom of the cliff. We don’t have the training. Its not part of our charter.

No, we’re not a crisis organisation... but does that mean we never deal with teens in crisis? Of course we do. And we have put some kids into emergency

accommodation, notified DOCS about abuse, and organised counselling, talked lost souls out of further self-mutilation, and we’ve gone to visit others in juvenile detention too. But it’s not what we concentrate on.

We’re more about prevention than rescue. Our message is one step removed from the ‘big pull’ of emergency response. We give teenagers hope and perspective and provide support around a young person’s life through adult interaction.

With all the shouting about retreating, and the recession, strained family relationships, and so many teenagers out of control and crying out for some understanding, I believe that we are called to press onwards.



Young Life has a plan and a vision for the way forward and it is being rolled out in communities across Australia. Now is the time to step forward with us, and really make a difference.

Armidale at Work

**Brendan Hatte,
Armidale
Area Manager**



Exciting work is continuing and this year has seen a few changes to our staff. I have been appointed Area Manager while continuing my P/T role as a Chaplain in Armidale High School. Lisa White has also come on board as an additional Chaplain to broaden our reach. We have two new Interns in Tim Forgeard and Amy Walsh, and Bronwyn Logan continues to co-ordinate our Youth Centre.

Young Life staff and volunteer leaders are continuing to meet young people where they gather, win the right to be hard, and then help build up their self-esteem, sense of hope and faith in the future. We also share the good news of Jesus when we can as we follow His servant model of service in all that we do.

Tim Forgeard, an Area Intern and Volunteer Leader reports we are making great progress in softening hearts, turning around destructive behaviour, and talking about how the good news of Jesus is great news for young people.

Canberra Update

**Kara Cavenagh,
Belconnen Area
Manager and Chaplain**



Hello all. I’ve recently started as the Area Manager for Belconnen in Canberra, and I’m the Chaplain at Belconnen High School. I’m thrilled by the challenges and humbled to be able to be part of the team.

Having worked in Care and Protection Services for a year I have come to recognise that the young people in Canberra are in desperate need of love, understanding and guidance. I am blessed that God has given me this opportunity to walk with these young people in love and model the love of Jesus to them in high schools. On the school front, Garth has left me with some great foundations to work with and at the moment I want to focus on building quality relationships with these young people. I am also exploring ways in which I can best serve the needs of the school.

I believe God has great plans for Canberra and I am already starting to feel a real sense of community in the Belconnen area. Paul Beresford has volunteered one day a week of his time to serving Young Life. We have already started building relationships with community organisations and local churches. I am excited and passionate about not only changing the lives of these young people but transforming the community too. I continue to pray that God will use me and that I will listen to what his will is for Canberra.

Staff Movements

Ben Staunton has left his role as Northern Regional Director and Area Manager for Armidale.

Brendan Hatte is Armidale’s new Area Manager and remains Chaplain at Armidale High.

Mary Lou Doe remains Chaplain at Emmaville CS and is now the Northern Regional Director.

Brooke Gagnon has taken over from Jess Stewart as Area Manager for Ryde and Northern Sydney.

Kara Cavenagh has commenced as Area Manager for Canberra and Chaplain at Belconnen High.

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Maroondah News

**Brett Kirkwood,
Maroondah
Area Manager**

Maroondah Club night craziness continues to catch on and grow in popularity as the young people who come tell others. As a result, our fortnightly club nights have been growing in numbers and enthusiasm this year more than any before.

Over 30 young people from local high schools and TAFEs are regularly involved at Club, averaging around 24 per night, which is a lot for us! What's more, none of them have had any previous involvement in Christian churches at all. Many are young people with very complex home lives, facing the full force of the usual teenage issues minus good adult role modeling and without any other positive social networks outside of school to tap into for guidance, understanding and support.

This year so far our Club messages given by the leaders at each Club have been on topics such as an introduction to Young Life Clubs; What is Easter really about; What is the Bible? What is Easter really about; Respect – earning it, getting it and giving it; and What is Faith all about? Our dedicated leaders will also be giving talks focusing on the persona and deeds of Jesus, later this semester.



It's all smiles in Maroondah at their Club nights.

Our core team of six leaders have our work cut out for us, especially without any female leaders at the moment. And the hope is that this will be changing very soon! The hard work of serving in our schools and encouraging teenagers to involve their mates outside of school is paying off though. And on behalf of the team in Maroondah I thank all of our supporters for your interest and assistance in so many different ways.

June and July will see us doing more of the same. That means plenty more contact work, fun and meaningful Club nights and further developing the young people in the one discipleship group that we currently running.

The Ryde Report

**Brooke Gagnon,
Ryde and Northern Sydney
Area Manager**



So here I am. The role looks slightly different to that of Jess and is starting in a part-time capacity. I have 13 years of Young Life involvement in the US, Canada and Costa Rica and served with summer staff at this year's camp in Jindabyne. I was excited to have met many of the people in the area before beginning my role. Please pray for me as I continue the process of carrying out my responsibilities for Ryde and beyond.

Three Year-12 boys and one Year-10 boy have become junior leaders for the Club and are in the active process of helping plan Club and learn the principles of Young Life behind the scenes. They are being empowered to lead games and songs in front of their peers and they are such a breath of fresh air.

The newest area in Northern Sydney is Crows Nest, which saw club start for the first time in March with a 'Rock Star' themed night that included Guitar Hero. It was a fun night where 8 students came from four different schools. More outings have been done and numbers are rising.

Our leadership team here continues to go through training and relationship building with our church partner, Northside Community Church, as to exactly how we can have the greatest impact on the community.

A great example of encouraging high school students to step into greater areas of empowerment happened over the April school holidays. One of our senior leaders at Ryde, Wez, is an amazing artist and he organised an "Artist Trading Card" event at Ryde Uniting. He brought in local primary school aged children and buddied them up with older teen mentors. They had great fun and it was a real win/win for everyone.

In term 2 we have planned Club to continue strongly in both areas, interspersed with a few creative outings, and in June an All-City Club that will encompass both clubs, as well as two groups of youth from the Maroubra area that have been connected to Young Life for many years. There's so much more work to do and I'll keep you posted on our progress.

Response Form

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We appreciate your support. It really makes a difference!

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Please make all cheques payable to Young Life.

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Our vision...

- ★ **18 Schools in every state and territory**
- ★ **80 Clubs operating around the nation**
- ★ **1 Camp property operated by Young Life**



Join us on the adventure!

The bumpy road to Year 10...

For far too many teenage girls, the road to Year 10 is not a wondrous passage through the adolescent growth years, but a tougher transition than previously thought.



What's on the minds of the teens of today? Aside from recently released research from the University of Wollongong tracked the lives of 700 secondary school students from the Illawarra district south of Sydney, over a period of six years.

It found that teenage girls, moving through the ages of 13 to 16, were the most likely of all young people to be abandoning hope and optimism. It's worth noting that girls entering high school come off a higher base in this regard, as the study reported that most started secondary school more confident than boys in their general outlook and in their capacity to accomplish set goals.

So what causes this downward spiral?

"I think one of the great failings in society as it stands today is a lack of faith and hope for the future," says CEO of youth mentoring charity, Young Life Australia. "There is a real need right now in the community for the 'old school' youth club. Fully supervised, with fun, self-esteem boosting activities as well as important interaction time and mentoring from adult role models."

"Sure we do that here at Young Life," concedes Henman, "but since the demise of Police Boys Clubs for young people back in the early '90s, and social clubs generally, we're one of the few organisations running a weekly or fortnightly Club night for teens, apart from some of the Church run groups which don't cater for unchurched youth."

The Illawarra research highlighted that Year 9 in particular seems to be a real crisis point in the emotional development of teenage girls. It's when hormonal driven competition between girls is at its fiercest, leading to relationships that are more competitive than supportive. Young women are also far more likely to get swept up in the early-onset pornification culture and the unrealistic body image demands that we face today.

An online poll of almost 1,000 young Australian women conducted by Grazia magazine in February and

March of this year revealed around one in five has or has had an eating disorder. It also revealed that 74% believed their weight affected their overall happiness, and 57% of all respondents wanted to be size-8 or under, regardless of their height, body shape or age.

"It's very disturbing," says Young Life's Glyn Henman. "We have a situation now where 12 and 13 year old girls are being sexualised like never before and pressured by their boyfriends to have full Brazilian wax jobs to try and fulfil their porn fantasies. In first form! I have even seen T-shirts worn by teens with the words 'it's not rape, just surprise sex' proudly emblazoned on them."

Another alarming trend that is having a big impact on young women is 'sexting', where teens and tweens create and exchange sexual images of themselves through their mobile phones.

Inappropriate sexting can lead to very serious repercussions. In New Jersey, USA, a 14 year old schoolgirl is facing child pornography charges after posting 40 shots of herself performing sexual acts on Myspace. Jesse Logan hanged herself in shame after shots she SMSed to her boyfriend were put online. A male student who borrowed a friend's phone found a screensaver shot of the 13 year old girl performing a sex act. NSW Police were called in and charges could be laid.

"If ever there was an advert not to have a camera on your phone, this is it," says Glyn Henman of Young Life Australia. "Young people need to be guided away from scenarios where they can really be run off the rails."

However, with good guidance and a willing ear from adults they trust, most teenagers can navigate through the rocky road of adolescence with the minimum of stress and develop into optimistic grown-ups with a clear life direction and a renewed sense of hope for the future.

Sources: University of Wollongong research study 2004-2009; Grazia poll 6/4/2009; Sun Herald 3/5/09; Glyn Henman, CEO Young Life Australia. Author: Philip Jenkinson.

Quick Questionnaire



We'd like to hear your views on a number of key issues relating to teenagers.

Go to www.younglife.org.au to complete the questionnaire. When we receive your answers we'll also ask if it's okay to email you occasionally with details of upcoming Young Life events you may be interested in.

Contact Young Life Australia

Call: 1300 557 647

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