

Generation Gap



During a quarrel with his parents, young Michael cried, "I want excitement, adventure, money, and beautiful women. I'll never find it here at home, so I'm leaving. Don't try and stop me!"

With that he headed toward the door. His father rose and followed close behind.

"Didn't you hear what I said? I don't want you to try and stop me."

"Who's trying to stop you?" replied his father. "If you wait a minute, I'll go with you."

The term "generation gap"⁴ was coined⁴ by sociologists and anthropologists in the 1960's and is often still used today. One concept of the generation gap is that parents and offspring have different values and beliefs. As a result, many parents fear that they will lose influence with their children when peer pressure becomes too highly valued.

Parents and their children find it hard to learn from each other, so they point their fingers at⁴ each other instead. Grown children often boast a better education and more secure finances than their parents, while the older generation may be richer in experience. How can we better get the two age groups to understand and appreciate the advantages of the other? We all have a responsibility to narrow the gap and balance each set of values, because social development needs them both.



- **generation gap** : the difference in values and attitudes between one generation and the next, especially between young people and their parents

- **coined** : invented

- **point the finger at** : blame or accuse (sb) of doing wrong

Comprehension



1. What does "generation gap" mean?
2. When was the term created?
3. Why is it important to narrow the gap?

Express Yourself



1. Why is it hard to understand the other generation?
2. For each generation, what is the first step in narrowing the gap?
3. In what areas of living is the generation gap widest?
4. Do you feel a gap between the values of your parents and yourself? What about between you and your kids?
5. What is the best way to eliminate⁴ the generation gap?

Opinion Samples



1. Listen more than you talk. Questions adults ask may seem like an interrogation⁴ to kids. So, instead of trying to control or manipulate⁴ a teenager, try to adopt an attitude of curiosity. Ask questions like, "Is this something you want me to help with?" If listening is your only object, you won't be formulating a response while your teen is still talking. You'll listen better, and the teen will feel encouraged to talk more.

2. Remember that hypocrisy⁴ and double standards⁴ are among the biggest adult lies for idealistic kids. Don't expect them to follow any rules you yourself violate. "Do as I say and not as I do" won't improve any relationship.

- **interrogate** : question (sb) formally and closely

- **manipulate** : influence or manage (sb) or (sth) in a clever or dishonest way

- **hypocrisy** : the practice of showing or expressing feelings, beliefs, or virtues that one does not actually hold or possess

- **double standard** : a set of principles or a moral rule used in one case but not in another

Useful Expressions



1. A teen-age girl usually makes up her face easier than her mind.
→ _____
2. About the only time teenagers get homesick these days is when they're at home.
→ _____
3. Teenagers haven't changed very much. They still grow up, leave home, and get married. The big difference is that today they don't always do it in that order.
→ _____
4. The easiest way to get a teenage boy to be quiet is to ask him where he's been.
→ _____
5. Nothing makes it more difficult to understand teenagers than listening to what they say.
→ _____
6. Today's teenagers will listen to CDs, radio, TV—they'll listen to anything but reason.
→ _____
7. If you want a definition of poverty, ask parents with three or four teen-agers in the family.
→ _____
8. Modern medicine still hasn't decided whether it's harder on a middle-aged man to wash the car himself or argue his teenage son into doing it.
→ _____
9. It's nice to kiss the kids goodnight—if you don't mind waiting up for them.
→ _____
10. Having teenagers is what undermines a parent's belief in heredity.⁴
→ _____

⁴ **heredity** : the passing on of qualities, characteristics, or traits from parents to their young through the genes