

American Parents 'Are Afraid of Their Own Kids,' Physician Says

Family physician and author Dr. Leonard Sax has made a name for himself by seeking to restore common sense to today's crazy world of child-rearing. He continues this quest toward restored sanity in a [recent interview](#) with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

As Dr. Sax explains, there is a great difference between parents in European countries, such as the U.K., and those in the U.S. That difference, Sax explains, is fear:

"I've been a medical doctor for 30 years and I've seen this firsthand how North-American, Anglophone parents increasingly are afraid of their own kids. And this is true, incidentally, across the demographic categories. I find this in affluent homes."

According to Dr. Sax, child phone usage is one area in which parents are particularly paralyzed. What they fail to realize, however, is that they're in charge and need to take control:

"You have to empower parents to do the right thing. I tell parents, 'At nine o'clock at night at the very latest, you turn off the device, it goes in the charger, which stays in the parents' bedroom. She can have it back tomorrow morning. ... And I empower the parent and say, 'You must do this. It's not reasonable to put this burden on your 14-year-old daughter!'"

Unfortunately, while many parents want to regain their rightful authority and control, many are still too terrified as to how their child will react if his or her wishes are

crossed. For those parents, Dr. Sax offers the following four steps to restored sanity:

1. Don't Be Cute – To put it simply, parents who try to be their child's friend won't cut it. The parent is in charge and should convey the seriousness of the situation.

2. Admit You're Wrong – As hard as it is for parents to do, Dr. Sax believes it is good and right for them to admit to their children that they have made some mistakes by failing to give needed boundaries.

3. Lay Down the Rules – Admitting mistakes gives parents the opportunity to reverse course and make changes. Dr. Sax suggests these changes are as simple as the following rules:

- No screens in the bedroom or at the dinner table.
- Homework and chores come before entertainment.
- Conversation will replace earbuds or headsets in the car.

4. Stand Your Ground – According to Dr. Sax, the above rules are sure to be followed by a tantrum, and maybe even a week of uncomfortable situations. But in speaking from personal experience, Dr. Sax assures parents that those who follow through with these principles will see a change for the better in only six weeks.

Is it time that more parents take these rules to heart, reclaim their authority, and stop being afraid of their children?