

Dealing with Teens and Spouses: Some Guidelines Compliments of the Federal Government

By extracting some of the expressions buried in the blather employed by politicians and bureaucrats, America's parents, husbands, and wives can find new and more effective ways to manage conversations with a teen or spouse. These gifts of gab should come as no surprise. After all, given the many failures of the federal government—the [crisis at the border](#), the [\\$34 trillion](#) debt, the regulatory chokehold they've applied to the throat of commerce, and so on—we're looking at leaders who are experts in doubletalk, gaslighting, euphemism, and protection of their posteriors.

Here are just a few tips from these masters of disasters:

The investigation is ongoing. Time after time, your 13-year-old has asked for a puppy. The next time he makes this request, plaster a faraway look on your face and say, "The investigation into this matter is ongoing, so I can't comment at this time." If he persists, send him to his anti-canine mother with this polished cop-out: "Let me put you in contact with someone who is better able to answer your question."

I'm not taking any questions today. When your teenager asks you why her friends can stay up to all hours of the night, but she has to hit the sheets by 10 p.m., this reply may do wonders. It's neutral in scope, and it includes all other queries. One caution: Your teen may make this line her own and throw it back at you when you ask her "How was school today?" or "You're an hour past curfew. What happened?"

Nota bene: Never ever say these words to your spouse unless

you plan on spending the night on the living room sofa.

We will provide you with updates as more information becomes available. When your 15-year-old asks you for the second time whether she can attend that pool party at her friend's house, this reply buys you time and also serves as a mild threat conveying your intention to investigate such details as the identities of the chaperones, the beverages being served, and whether that bad-news punk Johnny Johns is on the guest list.

This one also works for a husband when asked if he's ever going to repair the garage door or for a wife who, off on a shopping spree with her sister, wishes to dodge any questions about the amount of money she intends to spend.

Experts tell us that (fill in the blank). Here's an ideal ally in almost any situation, as we saw first-hand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Simply say those magic words—or some similar expression like “The science says ...”—and you're golden. Your son wants to go on a school snowboarding trip, and you don't want to pay the cost? “Experts tell us that snowboarding has a high incidence of mishaps,” you say, and you can add weight to your point, just as you might argue that snowboarding was relatively safe, by digging up information online for evidence to support your argument.

Referencing expertise and science (especially statistics!) can also work wonders when arguing with a spouse.

We're all in this together. This old line was revived during the COVID-19 pandemic but never really held water. The nurse in the hospital and the guy delivering groceries were never quite in the same situation as the dude in pajamas working at a screen and on a phone at home. Still, you can fly this banner when your kid complains about having to rake leaves or wash the supper dishes.

An existential threat. Politicos and commentators still employ this hackneyed phrase, so feel free to haul it out of storage

as needed. Prom night's coming up, and your daughter steps out of the store's changing room showing more skin than is tasteful. "Sweetie," you say gently, "that outfit is an existential threat to chastity and womanhood. Let's try the blue dress instead." If your husband forgets your anniversary, cry out, "This is an existential threat to our marriage!" and he'll remember the date ever after.

The feds can't balance a budget, halt the invasion at our southern border, or bring crooks to justice, but if we listen closely, they offer us a boatload of slick advice on the fine art of manipulation.

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