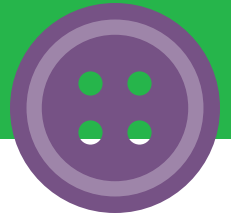


Button Pushing 101



IDENTIFY & DEFUSE

Your buttons and your teen's buttons for
a more peaceful and effective
parent-teen relationship



What are your Hot Buttons?? What does your teen do to that flusters you and distracts you from effective & calm parenting?



Buttons are words or actions that you or your teen use intentionally or unintentionally to frustrate, upset, anger, or hurt the other person during a disagreement about limits or consequences or anything.



Follow these steps to **STOP** letting your teen push your button, & **STOP** pushing your teen's buttons:

YOU WILL:



Feel better

Be more effective

Have a better relationship

Model better communication skills

Get more respect from your teen

Be in control of yourself, your words, & your behavior



Button Pushing 101



STEP ONE: IDENTIFY Your Buttons

Everyone has different buttons: it's important to know yours!



MAKE A LIST of the hot buttons your teen pushes to make you crazy/angry/sad/defensive/guilty?



ASK your partner or a friend if they notice any specific buttons your teen pushes.



Narrow Your List to your Top 5 Buttons:

What really gets to you?

What does your teen do/say that catapults you into emotional parenting mode?

Button EXAMPLES:

- Defiance "No"
- Swearing
- "I hate you"
- "You love ___ more than me."
- "You never let me do anything."
- Apathy "I don't care"
- "I am going to _____(insert any harmful behavior)"

MY TOP 5 BUTTONS:

1.

2.

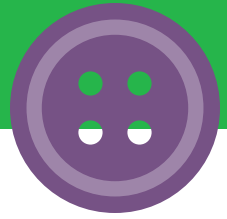
3.

4.

5.



Button Pushing 101



Step Two: Monitor your buttons



BE BUTTON AWARE: Chart your teen's button pushing behaviors for 5 DAYS.

- Write your Top 5 Buttons on the left side of a piece of paper
- FOR 5 DAYS, Make a check mark next to each time your teen pushes any button, and note how it makes you feel. Don't judge yourself, just notice.

BUTTON

CHECK

Feeling

Sample: "I Hate you"



Angry, hurt, "Ungrateful kid"

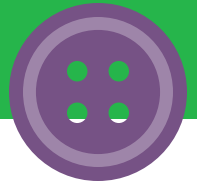
After 5 DAYS, you will have a lot more information:

WHAT PATTERNS DO YOU SEE?
WHAT BUTTON DOES YOUR TEEN USE THE MOST?
WHAT BUTTON CAUSES YOUR BIGGEST EMOTIONAL REACTION

ON YOUR TOP 5 LIST, PUT A STAR NEXT TO THE FREQUENTLY USED BUTTONS & A HEART NEXT TO THE ONES THAT CAUSE THE STRONGEST REACTION.



Button Pushing 101



Step Three: Identify your teen's buttons.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT??

Communication breaks down when you regularly push your teen's buttons.. YOU as a parent become less effective & damage your relationship & possibly push your teen further into withdrawal, defiance, and towards negative behaviors and negative support systems.



Ask yourself: What would my teen say if I asked him what I do that makes him frustrated, angry, sad or upset?

Don't ask your teen but show them the list when you are done and get their feedback

Teen Button Examples:

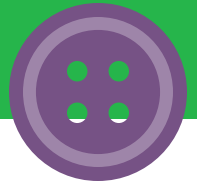
- Talking too much/lecturing
- Labeling: "You're lazy," "You're a liar."
- Catastrophizing: "You'll end up homeless," "You'll become a drug addict."
- Talking Down/Know-it-all
- Not listening
- Not accepting any questioning
- Fix it for them

MY TEEN'S TOP 5 BUTTONS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Button Pushing 101



Step Four: Learn new habits

Once you are aware of your buttons and your teen's buttons, you can change the "game" in your house by changing your button habits:



TAPE BOTH LISTS WHERE YOU CAN SEE THEM EACH MORNING (bathroom mirror? Closet door?) Look at them each morning during the first month of this effort. If it's comfortable, look in the mirror and say, "These are the buttons that cause me to lose my cool and lose control with my teen. I will not take the bait."

YOUR GOALS:

1. Change the way you respond when your teen pushes your buttons
2. Reduce the button pushing behaviors from your teen
3. Reduce your button pushing towards your teen



TALK TO YOUR TEEN about your efforts. "I'm learning new ways to communicate so that we argue less and I'm a better parent." Maybe they will want to learn more and maybe they will think it's corny. It doesn't matter what they say, they like that you care enough to make the effort.

**YOUR INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN HAS TO FIT YOUR STYLE:
SEE PAGE 6 FOR ACTION PLAN IDEAS**



Button Pushing 101



Action Plan Ideas



ASK FOR HELP from a co-parent or friend. (Any co-parents should know their buttons too!) Show them both of your lists. Come up with a lighthearted signal they can use to remind you when button pushing is happening. You have to agree to the signal so you do not feel judged.



REMEMBER YOURSELF THAT BUTTON PUSHING IS NOT PERSONAL. Your teen is trying to get what they want (developmentally normal) and this is what works for them. If it stops working, they won't do it. If you are thinking, "Why is she treating me this way?", you will feel more hurt and upset and may lose control of your feelings. **REFRAME: SAY TO YOURSELF:** "She's just button pushing and I'm not playing that game."



LEAVE a heated argument before it gets worse. "Right now we are pushing each other's buttons, so I am taking a break in my bedroom." Consequences and limits can be set later when everyone is calmer. **USE THIS SPARINGLY.** Even better if you explain how you calm down: "I'm going to write in my journal or take a walk or listen to music to calm myself down." Modeling Emotional Regulation!



PRACTICE: Role play with your co-parent or a friend. Practice will build your confidence when you are in a 'real' situation with your teen. Have them be your teen using the most emotional button you have! **AND** you can also role play how you would talk to your teen about some sensitive topic without using any of the top 5 Teen buttons you identified. This helps so much and can also be fun.



PRACTICE WITH YOUR TEEN! This is my favorite strategy and works well if you have a pretty solid relationship with your teen. Role play, with each of you playing the other. Practice a button pushing argument and then try the same argument without the button pushing.



BE CREATIVE: Put two jars in the kitchen, one says mom/dad and one says teen's name. If mom or dad do a top 5 button pushing, they put a dollar in the teen's jar. If your teen does a top five button pushing behavior, he puts a dollar in mom and dad's jar (or owes work?) **BE CREATIVE.**



PHYSICAL REMINDERS: Sticky notes? Actual Buttons? Put them up in areas where you are most likely to have conflicts with your teen. The kitchen? the entry hall? Write words on them or just have them there to remind you not to let your buttons be pushed.



