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Take your time and enjoy the process of learning.

The side bar information is used by many therapists to add "color" and warmth to their therapy sessions. You will not be tested on the side bar information unless it is a highlight of information from the text.

When you are done with the course, take the posttest. When you pass the posttest (70% or higher) and pay the course fee (\$10 per unit), you will be issued a CEU Certificate of Completion.

Enjoy!

<b>Course Name:</b>	Teaching Parents How To Deal With Uncooperative Teenage Behavior
<b>Course Number:</b>	B6C5-UTB
<b>CEU:</b>	1.0
<b>Instructor:</b>	Philip Copitch, Ph.D.

### Course material based on:

## Basic Parenting 101: THE MANUAL YOUR CHILD SHOULD HAVE BEEN BORN WITH

ISBN 0-9675870-6-9

*How-2 Parenting Series*

This book is available to therapists from CEUforTherapists.com at wholesale pricing.

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© 1999 Philip Coptich, Ph.D.  
“Don’t eat too fast,  
Honey.”

“DON’T YOU ROLL  
YOUR EYES AT ME!”

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. You will study procedures to teach parents how to deal with uncooperative teenage behavior.
2. You will read real life examples of how teens learn.
3. You will study ways to teach a complicated subject to parents who are coming to you for help with their children.
4. You will experience the power of story as a cognitive-behavioral therapeutic tool.
5. You will see ways to demystify psychotherapy for your patients.

**Tell me, I forget.**

**Show me, I remember.**

**Involve me, I understand.**

# SUGGESTED PREREQUISITE COURSES

I am assuming that the student has a solid understanding of learning theory and cognitive behavioral techniques. This course is based on and refers back to:

- B6C1 Teaching Parents About How Their Children Learn
- B6C2 Teaching Parents How To Build Their Child's Self Esteem
- B6C3 Teaching Parents About How To Use Time Out Effectively
- B6C4 Teaching Parents About Family Rules

In this course we will look at how a therapist teaches parents how to deal with a complex family problem. The above course materials are available, free of charge, from CEUforTherapists.com.

The sections in red are for your information. The sections in black are how I explain the process to the parent. Please note that I use a cognitive behavioral approach.

## INTRODUCTION

In this CEU course we are going to look at how to teach parents the process of dealing with uncooperative behavior in their teenagers. The following process has been used with teens suffering from mild to extreme behavior problems. In this situation we will discuss three typical families that may present for help at your practice or agency.

Often we need to teach parents to not get into a battle that they cannot win. Parents need to avoid getting into emotional logger heads with their teenagers.

Any clinician in this day and age who overlooks and fails to check for drug and alcohol abuse as a primary component of negative teenage behavior is either irresponsible or incompetent.

*Tough Love Solutions*  
Phyllis York  
Davis York  
Ted Wachtel

## UNCOOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR: SCHOOL MORNINGS, (TEENAGER)

My son is sixteen years old. He is intelligent and good. But I have a problem. I can't get him out of bed on school mornings. I have tried everything. I have begged. I have screamed. I have taken away his belongings to punish him. Nothing seems to work. He just says he is tired and that school is "boring."

At first glance there are two problems that catch my attention. First, why is getting up mom's problem? It sounds like mom is able to get up. Getting out of bed should be the child's responsibility. Second, whenever I come across the problem of teens unable to get up there is always a concern about drugs and/or clinical depression.

(See Course B6C5-SD Teaching Parents about Street Drugs)

Chuck was sixteen years old. He was having trouble getting out of bed in the mornings. His mother and father were at odds with him about "the normal teenage stuff:" his hair, his clothes, his

friends, and his school tardiness. Chuck lived ten minutes away from school and he was almost always late. It was such a problem that the school placed Chuck on academic probation because he was failing first period. He was doing “C” and “B” work in his other classes.

Chuck’s mother, Mrs. Koclowski explained:

Chuck is a great kid. We have been blessed with him. Until this year he has not been a problem. Both of our kids are great. Chuck’s older brother is a freshman in college this year. I have tried everything to get Chuck out of bed, He just lays there. My mother told me to pour cold water on him if he refuses to get up, but it felt wrong and Chuck was so angry with me, he just swore at me and laid in the wet sheets. We have taken away his belongings and grounded him. He has nothing left to take away. Every morning it is a big fight to get him out of bed. I hate the mornings.

The problem here is the ownership of the problem. It is not the parents’ responsibility to get their teen out of bed. It is the parents’ job to instill responsibility into their children. *As we discussed in Course B6C4 Teaching Parents About Family Rules, All things being equal, teens do what they want to do.*

Who is responsible to get to school on time? In this case it is Chuck. At the present time, the unwritten Must Rule is, “Mom gets upset and Chuck sleeps through it.” This is not a well written rule.

When the question was asked, “What is the reward Chuck is earning for sleeping in?” Mom, dad, and Chuck came up with:

1. Chuck hates first period English. He was getting a “D,” even when he went to class.
2. Chuck was winning mom in the morning by making her act crazy.
3. Chuck was tired and could not get up, so the sleep was a reward.

Thy fate is the common  
fate of all;  
Into each life some rain  
must fall,—  
Longfellow

When I asked Chuck about his future, he stated, “I’m going to college then getting a really good paying job.”

When I asked what Chuck did at night instead of sleeping, Chuck said, “I just kick and listen to music. I don’t get into any trouble.”

The new family rules (discussed by all, but written by mom and dad) were as follows.

Must Rule: Chuck will attend every class.

Consequence: Set by school.

Must Rule: Chuck will maintain a “B” average.

Consequence: Loss of driving privilege until grades are raised to a “B” average.

Must Rule: No music in house after 10 PM on school nights; midnight on non-school nights.

Consequence: Loss of stereo for 24 hours.

Must Rule: Mom and dad cannot complain about any music group.

Consequence: For every negative statement, Chuck receives a quarter to go towards buying music.

At the end of the second session, Mrs. Kocłowski lingered as the family left the room. She whispered, “We’ve done all this ... I don’t think it is going to work.”

“That may be so,” I smiled, “but you have to follow the Must Rules.”

Starting the next day, Chuck got himself up and out on time. He earned three dollars towards music and the family conflicts diffused. By the one month mark, Chuck had bought two used CD’s (about \$11) and his parents were happy to see their old Chuck back. Chuck had earned and completed two “Saturday Schools” for being tardy.

What happened? Where did the big fight go? The big fight centered around Chuck proving to his parents that he could make his own choices. To prove his point he stayed up most of the night and listened to music. That caused him to be too tired, but his mother took the blame for that (by working so hard to get him up) so Chuck never had to.

Only a few things really changed in Chuck’s world. The major change was that he got to listen to music while he was doing his homework. This was never allowed in the past. This had bothered Chuck because he saw this as an insult to his ability to make good choices. Another change was that Chuck’s parents stopped verbally attacking Chuck’s music. This was a big deal, because Chuck took the attacks as a personal attack on his character. (See [Course B6C2 Teaching Parents How To Build Their Child’s Self Esteem.](#))

By putting Chuck back in control of his responsibilities, Chuck did a reasonable job. It was interesting that one of the used CD’s that Chuck bought was a *Best of Pat Boone* that he gave to his parents as a present. In the card was the statement, “Not my kind of music!” Glued onto the card was a quarter.

In the next section, we will look at uncooperative teen behavior in school.

## **UNCOOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL (TEENAGER)**

Martin is sixteen years old. He is uncooperative and defiant in school. He verbally states that he does not wish to stay in school. He wants to “start his life.” Martin’s parents have been divorced for over five years. His mother is a waitress and his father is a long haul truck driver. Martin openly states that he hates school and wants to be a long haul trucker like his father. Martin’s mother is dead set against the whole idea. “I don’t want no son of mine,” she exclaimed, “Wasting his life driving a truck.” She wants her son to go to college and “To make something

out of himself.”

The day I met Martin he had just been sent home from the continuation high school because he was smoking on campus. He was asked to leave his neighborhood high school the year before due to daily disruptive behavior.

As I do with all cases of teens exhibiting disruptive behavior, I had Martin tested for drugs. To the surprise of his mother, he was clean.

When I met with this family, it was obvious that Martin was stuck in the middle of his parents’ angry divorce. It seemed that Martin had picked his father’s side because his father’s life looked more exciting. His father traveled all over the country and seemed to have an easy life. Lots to see, cash in his pocket, and little pressure.

Over the course of three weeks I got mom to reluctantly agree to let Martin ride with his father for the whole summer. Martin would get to live the life of the trucker. To see, first hand, if it was for him. This was not an easy situation for mom to agree to. She was sure that trucking was the reason for her divorce and she didn’t like the idea of her “baby” living on the road. She also knew that living with Martin was getting impossible and she had to do something.

Two months into the three months of summer trucking, Martin unexpectedly returned home on the bus. It took him three more days to tell his mother what was going on.

It was stupid. All I did all day was sit in a truck. When we did get to some town, the load wasn’t ready and someone would yell at dad. It wasn’t dad’s fault, but if you’re a trucker the people in the office treat you like dirt. I just couldn’t handle sitting any longer, so dad gave me bus fare home.

While Martin was away, mom and I worked on a contingency plan, just in case Martin returned home. The new Must Rules devised by mom and presented to Martin were as follows (Martin was much easier to talk to now that he was “choosing” to live with his mother):

Must Rule: Martin must go to all his classes.

Consequence: School consequences and 1 chore for every class missed.

Must Rule: Mom will not bad mouth dad.

Consequence: Mom has to make a dessert.

Must Rule: Martin will not smoke in the house or at school. He can smoke on back porch and walking to and from school.

Consequence: Martin does own laundry for one week. (Mom seemed to like to do Martin’s laundry, but refused to do mine when I offered to drop it off.)

Two years later I got a call from Martin. He was graduating from high school and joining the

Army. When I asked him what his future plans were he proudly said, "I want to be a fire fighter."

Note: The teen has the power over the parent when it comes to their actions. We can advocate for them but they must do their own choice making. When mom started advocating for Martin, he learned that the fantasy life he thought trucking was, wasn't for him. With information (education), most people make better choices, most of the time.

The best memory is that which forgets nothing but injuries. Write kindness in marble and write injuries in the dust.

Persian proverb

Mrs. Rallof was very upset the first time I met her. She told me,

Jack (sixteen years of age) is a good boy. He is very smart and has lots of potential. He can do anything he puts his mind to. The problem is that he just doesn't care about acting good. I had a meeting with his dean and was told that Jack was on his last chance. One more referral slip to the dean and Jack will be suspended for five days. When I tried to talk with him he just said, "They can't do that to me, I'm not that big of a problem."

Over the next week I met with the Rallof family three times. Jack's drug test was negative and mom was correct, Jack was very smart. He presented himself as arrogant and I could see how a teacher would find his attitude hard to live with. Overall, the Rallof family was functioning quite well. The only real problem was Jack's attitude about being in school. Mr. and Mrs. Rallof only wrote one Must Rule. (Even though I asked for more. The parents were as hard to teach as their son!)

Must Rule: Jack's job is to get through his class day without being in conflict with his teachers.

Consequence: Mom will follow Jack around school to make sure he is following the rule.

Mrs. Rallof contacted the dean and requested permission to supervise Jack throughout his day rather than suspending him. The dean agreed. It only took until lunch the next day for Jack to test the dean's and his mother's resolve. Mrs. Rallof followed the rule. She shadowed Jack around for one full day. She sat at the back of Jack's classes and walked a few yards behind him in the hallways. She supervised his behavior because he was unable to do it himself.

Jack's behavior improved dramatically. For the next two years Jack earned not one referral slip to the dean's office. Once Jack believed that his parents expected appropriate behavior in school he stopped testing the size of the behavioral envelope and acted appropriately in class.

## POSTTEST

When you're ready, take the posttest to obtain your CEU certificate. Your test consists of 5 multiple choice or true/false questions per Continuing Education Unit (3 CEU = 15 questions).

