

The rules of logical consequences

Rule 1: Ask yourself who has ownership of problem

Is this your problem or your young person's, or both?
 Is there a natural consequence to the young person's action?
 Will this be an uncomfortable but safe consequence?
 Do we as parents need to do anything?
 What role are we being put into?

So before doing anything reflect, think about it, talk to someone you respect about it, give yourself the time BEFORE you act.

Rule 2: Own your own feelings – 'I' statements

This is about the parent owning their feelings. To avoid conflict it is helpful to first think about what the parent wants to say and secondly put the young person in a less defensive position. This can be aided by the parent taking ownership of his or her own feelings and using 'I' instead of 'YOU'.

The purpose of owning the feeling is to enable the parent not to get into a power struggle with their young person. Explain to the parents the importance of using "I" messages instead of "you" messages. Also the importance of naming the feeling when responding in a conflict situation, using a soft and non-aggressive tone, not using any put downs and, once the statement is given to the youngster, withdrawing yourself from the situation and immediate environment (WALK AWAY!).

Rule 3: The consequence needs to have a direct and obvious link to the behaviour

The consequence must fit the crime and a backup consequence is always recommended. The consequence needs to be short to ensure that the young person has a better chance of learning from that experience. For example, grounding a young person for a month loses its impact very quickly. Within a month the young person has probably forgotten the reason for the grounding and is instead left feeling resentful towards the parent for grounding them. Taking a phone card away for one night leaves the young person very aware of the reason for the phone card being taken away and he/she has the opportunity to make things better again.

Rule 4: Give sadness & empathy

Sadness and empathy drives home the lesson of the consequence, because letting the consequences do the teaching isn't enough. The thing that drives the lesson down into the young person's heart after she/he makes a mistake is our sadness and empathy that accompanies the consequence. When the young person /teen blows it, it is crucial that we express our ache and sincere concern as he/she suffers naturally occurring or logically imposed consequences. This is effective because when we respond with sadness and empathy while imposing consequences we put the relationship between the young person /teen and us foremost. In doing so we convey that our unconditional love reigns supreme and that a foul-up, regardless of how serious on his/her part, does not change that we are "on their side".

Rule 5: Clean slate . . . moves on, say it then wipe the slate clean

After the consequence has been given and dealt with, parent moves on and wipes the slate clean. Often resentment and anger toward the young person lingers on. If the parent remains negative and surly there is a danger that the young person will lose the opportunity of learning from the consequence.



I -STATEMENT

- I feel.....(parents feeling i.e. scared, worried)
- When(the act/behaviour)
- Because.....(the consequence the parents thinks will happen)
- I would like(the action/behaviour the parent would like)

EXAMPLE: USE I STATEMENTS SUCH AS:

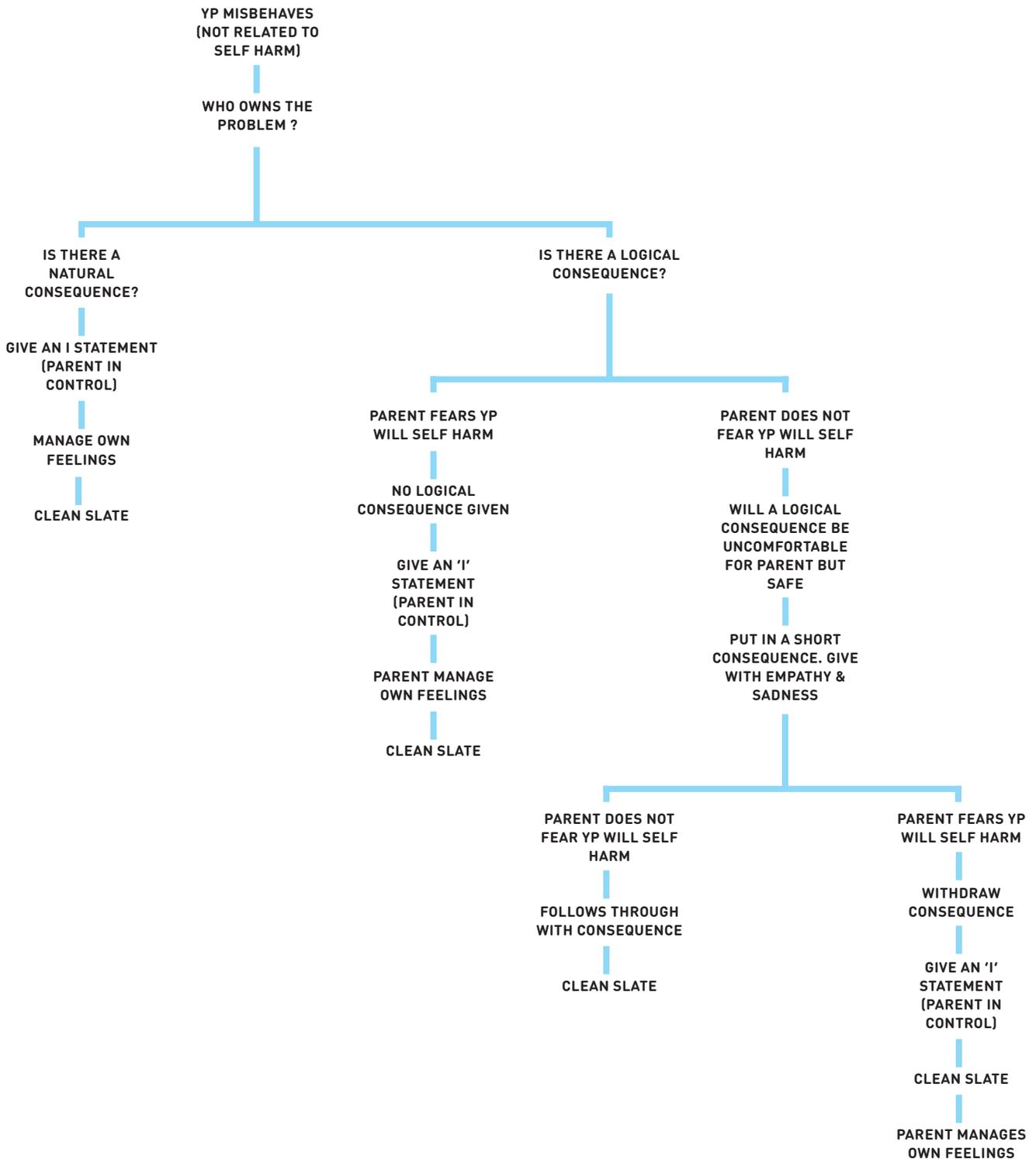
"I feel concerned when I see the cuts on your arms because they look sore I would like us to talk about this".

"I feel worried when I don't know how things are because I am concerned that it may lead to something more serious".

"I would like you to know that you can talk to me or someone you trust about how you are feeling".



CONSEQUENCES FLOW CHART



When to say no

(Fenwick, E & Smith, T, 1998)

It is in the nature of adolescents to demand more freedom than they think they will get – and sometimes even rather more than they really want. Don't worry about giving an unequivocal, non-negotiable "no" occasionally. There are times when a course of action proposed is so off-limits that there's little point in even pretending that there's room for discussion. Often in such cases the young person has only been testing you anyway, the last thing they expect is to be taken seriously. Adolescents are extremely sensitive to any suggestion that they are not completely capable of organizing their own lives. Parents are accused of interfering if they offer guidance or advice, if they enquire about their youngster's whereabouts or activities, if they comment on the state of their room, or their preparedness (or lack of it) for an exam.

- **MAKE THEM FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE.** How much pocket money they get will obviously depend on what you can afford, but, however much or little this is, give it regularly so that the teenager can plan and budget. This is much better financial training than forking out, however generously, for each demand as it arises.
- **ENCOURAGE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS** with friends and their involvement in activities outside the family. If you are reluctant to let them meet other people, they may hide their friends from you or feel they have to break away completely.
- **ENCOURAGE THEM TO TAKE SCHOOL TRIPS** and exchange visits abroad if the opportunity for these should arise.
- **GIVE THEM SOME DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES.** It needn't be much, but it should be something they're expected to do regularly, whenever it needs doing. An older teenager might also be given responsibility for planning, shopping for and cooking one family meal a week, within a given budget.

- **NEGOTIATE THE AREAS IN WHICH YOU INTEND TO "INTERFERE"** (progress at school, for example, or their whereabouts when they go out) and those you will leave up to him or her (room-tidying or deciding what to spend money on, for example).
- **ACCEPT YOUR LIMITATIONS.** You cannot force teenagers to work harder than they want to, or to do homework they have no intention of completing. All you can do is make sure your young person is aware of the consequences. Sometimes a "carrot" works: a promise of a contribution to something they're saving for, for example.
- **LET THEM MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS,** even if you think they're making a mistake.
- **LET THEM TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR DECISIONS** you have agreed between you are to be their responsibility. If your son cannot find his football kit under the debris in his room, do not backtrack and tidy it for him – even if he howls.
- **BE AVAILABLE TO GIVE ADVICE** when you are asked. Remember that even if you're not allowed to interfere, you are still expected to give unequivocal support and be around to act as a backstop in case of emergency.
- **THE ACCUSATION THAT "YOU'RE ALWAYS INTERFERING"** peaks in mid-adolescence. If you continue to interfere much beyond this time, then almost certainly you're interfering too much.



