



parent tips



4 Stages of Leading Your Student

Source: *Generation Z Unfiltered* | Pgs 72 - 73 | By Tim Elmore & Andrew McPeak

One parenting problem we can run into is getting stuck in our ways and not adapting our parenting as our children age. When they are young, they need a more directional approach than when they've aged and better understand concepts and choices in life. Below, are four stages that experts say are good way for us to lead our children where they are at:

1. Micro-manager (first six years, ages 0-6)

During their early childhood, children need far more direct and clear leadership. They think concretely, not abstractly. Instructions must be simple to understand and clear to follow. Adults observe everything first hand. Both positive and negative reinforcement are helpful to encourage growth. This stage is about **discipline**. *"What do we do, and how do we act?"*

2. Manager (next six years, ages 6-12)

During elementary school, kids need increased autonomy and responsibility. With each year, they should earn a little more freedom as they can be trusted to be dependable with it. Clarity and simplicity are still important, but kids can act on their own. Autonomy increases as responsibility increases. This stage is about **training**: *"Why do we do what we do?"* Many children at this age we see are craving to be trusted, but often feel like all they are is in trouble. So when we say they can't do something, it's partly because we are frustrated with behaviors or know that something is unsafe. It's a phrase used by leaders, teachers, and parents alike; but how can we go from just saying "because I said so" to giving a simple explanation as to **why** they can or can't do certain things? We need to be able to set expectations for them at this stage while maintaining proper guidance to the explanation of it.

3. Supervisor (next six years, ages 12-18)

During their teen years, kids move from concrete to abstract thought. They can understand concepts like: *You can borrow the car if you put gas in the tank.* Again, autonomy grows with responsibility. Life skills can be taught and "equations" work well. There are benefits and consequences for choices. This stage is about **coaching** - collaborating on good decisions. Be observant to what your children are doing. Look for things they do that you can help them focus on to do well. Sharing regular meals together is a great thing for families to do, especially during these years. **It's even better when you involve them in the grocery shopping and cooking part of it.** It's easier for them to want to be involved in a family dinner if they've had some input. Not only do you get to spend time with them they are also learning a life skill. Giving praise is still something your teens want and need. They may act like they are "too cool" to care about what their parents think, but the truth is they are still seeking your approval. Be looking for opportunities to be positive and encouraging, especially when you feel your relationship with them is being strained.

4. Consultant (next six years, ages 18-22)

As they finish high school, our role must move from supervisor to consultant. Our leadership is still present, but young adults must experiment. They learn *just in time*, not *just in case*. We can incentivize their growth by offering experiences that force them to do so. This invites them to seek mentors. This stage is about

friendship: you are both adults who enjoy the interaction. This is one of the best stages, when you reach this stage they could openly asking for your guidance and advice, without the feeling of “do what your parent says.” You as the parent or leader are looked to as someone they trust and while they are still navigating through things during early adulthood - you should still maintain the previous steps. As children get older and become husbands/wives and parents themselves they will seek to do more things as a family. They will be craving these conversations. There are several ways to grow a healthy relationship with your adult children. Here are eight: recognize and respect your differences, share your wisdom and insight (without being critical), set boundaries, do things you love together, make room for their significant other, be a consultant (not a CEO), be a sounding board (listen), and continue family meetings.

Question to think through: Which stage are you in? Are you leading your kids in the stage they are in?