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In the few years I have been a parent of adolescents, I have learnt a few things that have changed the way I do parenting. Over the years I have attended parenting classes and read parenting books that taught me how to bring up successful children. But it wasn't until recently that I noticed I wasn't learning anymore.

I was doing parenting the way I had always done parenting, oblivious of the fact that my kids had grown up and needed a different approach. I believe that when children are younger, they need loving firmness and rules. But when they enter adolescence and teen years, they need understanding, creativity, support and care.

When we raise young children right, by the time they are teens, they already know right and wrong. They have discipline and life skills and know what is expected of them. As such, adolescent and teen years is not the time to insist on rules and doing things our way as parents. It's the time to support our pre-teens and teens to continue doing the good they already know how to do.

While we must absolutely still require obedience from our children in their adolescent and teen stages, we must be careful to be flexible with them and understanding of the challenges they are facing with all the changes taking place in and around them. Most of them still want to obey, just in their way. Insisting that they obey our way discourages and pushes them away.

I believe daily expression of loving kindness, affirmation, encouragement and caring support are key requirements for the adolescent and teen years. This is not the time to be forceful and come off as pushy and rude to the children. It is time to turn on the heat in seeing things from their perspective. I have seen kindness, affirmation and support yield very positive responses from my adolescents.

Teenagers are no longer little children. They are growing into young adults and should be treated as such if they are to transition successfully through the tumultuous teen years and wind up successful young adults. What I am finding important in this stage is creating an atmosphere

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where our teens are happy and still want to be around us. This way, we can continue to be a good influence in their lives, and hopefully override all the varying influences competing for their attention.

For His Glory,

Lillian Chebosi