



The Crisis Switch: How to Keep Adults off Your Back.

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Every Adult has a crisis switch. Your parents, teachers, counselors, and other adults in your life all have crisis switches. You might not realize it, but you can turn the switch off and on. You probably don't want it turned *on* because that usually means that the adult or adults who have their switches turned *on* are on your back. When an adult is on your back you have less freedom, less control over your choices, and they always seem to be on you about what you are doing, where you are going, and so on. Stop and think about it for a minute. Are your parents or other adults all over you about things in your life??? That probably means that their crisis switch is turned *on*.

So... how did their switch get flipped on?? Well, if you are here, in counseling, you've probably been making some not so good choices that got you here. Maybe you're in trouble with the police or school or maybe you have been yelling at your parents. Whatever the reason we need to get all these people off your back, right? I mean, come on, you want your Mom checking up on you all the time?? Whenever you do things like talk back to a teacher or break the law, the switch gets flipped *on*. It gets turned on because your parents or teachers think "Oh my gosh, something is wrong, he must not be able to handle making decisions. I need to step in and make decisions for him". When they start thinking like this, your freedom to choose how you live your life is gone until they start to think "Wow, she has really been taking care of herself and making good decisions, I can relax now knowing that she is going to be ok". These kinds of thoughts turn the switch *off*.

Think about it this way... If you had a kid and they kept burning their hand on the stove, what would you do? Would you just let them keep burning themselves or would you do anything you could to keep them from getting hurt? Hopefully you would keep them from getting hurt. Now, think about yourself getting in trouble with the police. Do you think your parents want you to be locked up in jail?? OF COURSE NOT! If parents see that you are making bad decisions they will flip the crisis switch to the *on* position.

Here are some helpful ways to keep the crisis switch turned *off*:

1. Don't yell at adults. Yelling at them tells them that you are acting like a kid. If you are acting like a kid adults will treat you like a kid. Even if your parents yell at you, you can still be the mature person and not yell.
2. If you screw up or make a mistake, just admit it. Trying to lie your way out of getting busted just makes you look more guilty and decreases your parents trust in you. It also makes them mad and flips the crisis switch. Oh, and if the crisis switch is already flipped when you lie, that just keeps the crisis mode turned on for much longer.
3. Don't break the law. No brainer right? Nothing sends parents into crisis mode like their teenager breaking the law. Remember, until you are 18, your parents are legally responsible for you. That means if you get in trouble, they get in trouble. Parents who are in trouble usually make their teenagers lives really rough. Don't believe me? Look around at some people you know who are in trouble with the law. Would you want to be in their shoes?
4. Screaming, yelling, throwing things, slamming doors, calling your parents names or calling teachers names and similar stuff is not a good idea. Remember talking about acting like a kid.... This is how you do it.
5. Do what you are supposed to do. School stuff, chores, whatever. If you are slacking off, your parents and teachers think " Oh my gosh, my kid is lazy and has no direction in life. I better jump in and give my kid some goals and direction". You see it??? It's your freedom floating away...
6. Don't make being "cool" a goal for yourself. Really. If you are working on being "cool" then you aren't cool. Being "cool" doesn't have anything at all to do with how you dress, who you hang out with, or what kind of car you drive. I know that lots of people think it does. They are wrong. What makes someone "cool" is that they are OK just being themselves. The dude that everyone thinks is a dork in high school, you know the one, he's the "cool" one. Why? Because he knows that "fitting in" is a bunch of crap. He wears what he wants and does what he wants because that's who he is. Look around your school... let me guess what you see... geeks, jocks, rednecks, preps, goths, punks, stoners, skaters, gangsta wannabes, and so on. Now, think about this for a second... what if all this meant nothing? Sometimes people think that they need to look, act, and seem like others to be a part of things. The truth is that everyone is pretty much just like you. They get upset sometimes, cry, get angry, feel sad, feel lonely, get rejected by others, make bad decisions, feel like they're stupid, and worry about what everyone thinks about them. Sound familiar? It does to me... I still feel and do all those things from time to time. To be honest, when I see a 20 year old dressed and acting like someone on MTV, I feel sad for them. Why? Because they don't feel like

they can just be themselves. Nobody is a skater for example... why? Well, because underneath the clothes and attitude is just a person... just like everyone else and being a *good* person is the greatest thing anyone can ever achieve. Think about it... if you're a jerk, you can wear anything you want, drive a new car, get tattoos, and guess what... you'll still be a jerk.

7. I know you've heard this one a million times. Don't use drugs or alcohol until you are at least 18. I know, drugs are illegal at any age and you can't drink until you are 21. I'm telling you 18 because that's when you can do something stupid and it won't legally affect your parents. Sure, it will affect them emotionally and will probably embarrass them, but hey, you're 18 now and they don't have to let you live at home anymore if they don't want to. Until you're 18 though, drinking and drugging are good ways to get your parents to crawl all over you all the time. So, to sum this paragraph up, if you want your parents to be on you like white on rice, smoke up! Oh and be sure to get good and paranoid when you're high cause if you're doing drugs and drinking you will have somebody out there in authority who knows about it. Unless you are doing it on an island with no one around, people know. Think about all the crap you hear about other people at school. You think no one talks about you hitting the pipe? Wrong. You know the way your school works. Somebody tells so and so and they tell somebody and by the end of the day everyone knows. Even the School Resource Police Officer. When I talk to the School Resource Officer at the high school, he can tell me pretty much every kid at the school that is into drugs and alcohol. He watches them closer than the rest of the students. How does he know? People talk. Do you think the girl who everyone knows hooked up with this guy at the football game thought the friend she told would tell anyone. She didn't but SURPRISE!! Everyone knows.
8. Relax. Plain and simple, just relax. So your mom is making you stay home and you want to go out. Relax. No one ever lost their popularity because they missed a football game or a party. In fact your friends who go out will probably miss you and want to see you more. If you are around people all the time they can get sick of you. I always wanted to see my friends more when I hadn't seen them for a while and they wanted to see me more too. For example, the bands I like the most now, for example, are usually the ones that no one really knows and I don't hear about every day. I want to know more about them because they aren't being pushed in my face all the time. It's really true that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Remember: Better decisions = More freedom

Ok... so you think ya got it?? People treat you according to how you act. Some people you know at school or elsewhere probably don't get into any trouble and have lots of freedom. Now you know why. If you show people that you can take care of yourself and

make good decisions, you'll have freedom too and no one will feel like they have to watch you all the time. Remember though, that when you do screw up you will lose freedom for a while... that's a natural consequence... continue making good, mature choices and you'll get that freedom back!!

Joey Dickson