

# I Hate My Teen!

Managing taboo feelings with NLP coaching techniques



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A duality of feelings is alive in all of us: love, hate, pride, shame, etc.

**P**arenting teenagers often brings a surge of complex emotions, some of which are socially considered 'taboo', such as intense anger or feelings akin to hate. These emotions, while natural, are often shrouded in guilt and misunderstanding, making them challenging to address.

I love working with parents of teens (I am myself a parent of teenagers). I am also the first to admit that parenting teenagers can be challenging – but it can also be a profoundly transformative journey.

So, what do I mean when I talk about taboo feelings? Aren't we proud of our growing teens? Don't we admire their new-found ease in public speaking or their cheeky smile that reminds us of our spouse (on a good day!)? Yes, but our feelings can also be mixed and contradictory: we are proud of our children, yet we can also feel ashamed, embarrassed, frustrated, irritated... This

duality of feelings is alive in all of us.

Sometimes we voice these feelings during a heated exchange of words: *I hate you!* But more often we try to hide them behind a mask of the 'good parent'. We attempt to keep our emotions in check, but we all have thoughts and feelings that we hide from others.

Your teen has been observing you closely since the day they were born. For example, they notice the explicit outward confidence you display in your professional field, yet they also notice the subtle, hidden flash of envy as your neighbour talks of her latest exotic holiday. Your teen observes and learns from your body language, your facial expressions and your energy.

Gamblers call these 'tells', because they tell when a player is bluffing, and this is what your teen has observed over the years, though they may be unaware of it. This observation means our teenagers know exactly how to probe and provoke us.

They see an emotion that was not explicit: was it envy? They poke us, they probe us, they ask us questions: "Why don't we ever go on exotic holidays? Can't we afford it?" They see our reaction and bingo! They are right: it *was* envy, we *are* feeling insecure and because much of this is unconscious, their question triggers us and before we know what's happening, we're frustrated and irritated. Depending on the context, feelings can escalate to anger and, in some situations, rage and even hate. Now add these triggers and emotions to the mix of everything else parents of teenagers have going on – teenagers are not the only ones going through hormonal upheaval! Parents of teens might be experiencing perimenopause, marital fatigue, ageing parents, professional burnout, etc. It's a wonder we get through the day in one piece!

Sometimes, during a coaching session, a parent will take a while to feel comfortable about expressing

these taboo feelings but when they do, they pause and observe me for my reaction. The first thing I do is *normalise* the feelings. Once we normalise these feelings, we can bring them to the surface and examine them. Jung said: “Until we make the unconscious conscious, it will direct our lives and we will call it fate.”

Normalising the conversation around taboo feelings, making the unconscious conscious opens pathways for effective management and better rapport with your teen.

I urge parents to examine their emotions closely. Are your feelings of shame about a teenager’s exam failure more a feeling of guilt that you could have done more to help them prep? Could the feeling of hate be rooted in frustration or disappointment in yourself?

### Using NLP to manage emotions

Once the feelings have been normalised and brought to the surface, NLP offers many valuable techniques for managing these taboo emotions.

**Reframing:** For example, intense anger can be reframed as a deep sense of care that needs redirection. You can reframe anger as a signal of underlying stress, not a direct response to your teen’s behaviour. This perspective shift can allow healthier interactions.

**Anchoring:** Create positive anchors or triggers to counteract negative taboo feelings. Associate a positive emotion with a specific physical gesture, word or image that you can recall when you experience taboo feelings.

**Sub-modalities:** Analyse the sub-modalities of your taboo feelings. Identify how you represent these emotions in your mind, such as their size, colour or location. Modify these sub-modalities to change your perception of the feelings.

**Parts integration:** If you experience internal conflicts related to taboo feelings, employ NLP parts integration techniques to harmonise conflicting aspects of yourself. This can help you find balance and resolution.

**Metaphors:** Create and explore metaphors related to your taboo feelings. By representing emotions metaphorically, you can gain insight and clarity, which can make them easier to handle.

**Future pacing:** Project yourself into the future to visualise a scenario where you’ve successfully dealt with taboo feelings. This helps create a compelling vision and motivates you to work towards change.

**Recognising limiting beliefs:** Some beliefs contribute to these negative emotions, such as “I must always be in control,” or “A good parent never feels angry with their child.” Challenge and replace these.

By addressing taboo emotions with NLP techniques, parents can benefit themselves but, most importantly, they can positively impact their teenagers’ growth and development.

Finally, I encourage parents to consider their own experiences as teenagers and how these might influence their taboo emotions. And don’t forget that self-care is essential for emotional balance. Exercise, sleep and hobbies aren’t luxuries but necessities. ■

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Carl Gustave Jung

### First Steps: Gaining a Deeper Awareness of Taboo Emotions

**Journaling:** Keeping a journal can help you track your emotions over time. Write down how the emotions show up in your body – you feel tight in your shoulders or your throat, for example.

**Seeking feedback:** If you can, talk to a trusted friend, family member, therapist or coach about your emotions and thoughts. They may provide a different perspective and help you identify any feelings you may not have been aware of.

**Paying attention to triggers:** Notice situations, topics or interactions that make you uncomfortable or defensive. These can be clues to underlying taboo feelings that you may need to explore.

**Mindfulness and meditation:** Practising mindfulness can help you become more aware of your thoughts and emotions without judgment.

**Therapy or counselling:** If you suspect you have deep-seated or repressed taboo feelings, seeking the help of a therapist or counsellor can be beneficial.

**Art and creative expression:** Engaging in creative activities such as writing, painting or music can provide an outlet for exploring and expressing taboo feelings in a safe and non-judgmental way.

**Take your time:** Recognising and understanding taboo feelings can be a gradual process. Be patient with yourself and allow time for self-discovery.

