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Is Staying Home on Friday Night So Terrible?

By Lisa A. Beach



My 15-year-old son and I have this push-pull relationship going on right now. Whenever I try to push a good idea (basic common sense) his way, he resists and pulls away. This yo-yo-ing gets tiresome and leads to lots of disagreements, but I understand it's all part of the teenage package.

However, of all the things my son and I disagree about—screen time, his attitude, the weather—I never thought we'd argue because—wait for it—I wanted him to have fun on a Friday night.

What kind of a monster am I?

Here's how it all went down: My stubborn sophomore basically planted himself in front of his Play Station most weekends during ninth grade. He didn't attend any social events other than soccer games and track meets because he was on the team.

"It's a transition year," everyone kept telling me.

"He'll come around," they said.

But when his tenth grade social life started down the same path, I put my foot down. It was homecoming weekend, packed with a Friday football game

and a Saturday dance. Getting him to attend the dance would be a hard sell, so I focused on the football game. True to form, he refused to go.

Now, there are worse problems than having your teenager want to stay home on a Friday night. I get it. But I wanted him to be a bigger part of the school community.

My usual ploy of appealing to his logic was an epic fail. "It will be the best game of the year!"

"You can leave at half-time if you're not having fun." And what I thought would hit pay dirt: "I'll give you money for candy and soda."

Getting nowhere fast with this kid. Finally, I tried another tactic. "Okay, you don't have to go to the football game, but if you stay home, you can't play video games."

Well, that was the shot heard 'round his teenage world.

"Are you kidding me?" he shouted. "That's so not fair! Why are you punishing me? No one I know goes to the football games." On and on he ranted.

My husband Kevin and I tried to reason with him (again), but this only made him dig his heels in.

That is, until Kevin's cell phone rang. It was his friend Todd, whose son Brandon is one of my son's best friends.

"Oh, Brandon's already at the football game?" Kevin asked loudly so my son could overhear. After getting a few more details, Kevin hung up.

We decided to press the issue one more time. We wanted our son to do more than just go to school. We wanted him to get involved.

"Fine, I'll go," my son relented as he ran upstairs to change his clothes.

Within five minutes, he was out the door, in the car, and on the way to his first high school football game. Three hours later when we picked him up, he was all smiles as he gave us a quick recap of the night.

We could have just let the issue slide, allowing our son to stay in his comfort zone. But we knew he needed a push, even if it was to get out and have some fun. ■

Lisa Beach is a freelance writer, blogger, mother of two teenagers, and recovering homeschooler who lived to write about it. Visit her writer's website at www.LisaBeachWrites.com.