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'I Felt Sick': Man Praised for Admitting How He Treated Teen Stepson

By [Alyce Collins](#) On 3/7/23 at 11:14 AM EST

After facing backlash for his strict household rules, one stepdad has now been lauded by internet users for listening to the criticism and changing how he treats his teenage stepson.

Reddit user u/nervousaccomplice74 originally posted to [seek advice for his unruly 16-year-old stepson](#), whom he felt was "nothing but disrespectful."



Stock image shows a father and son sharing popcorn on a sofa. A stepdad has been praised by internet users for letting go of his strict house rules, and listening to his stepson's needs instead. GeorgeRudy/Getty Images

The United States Census Bureau said in 2021 that there were over 73 million children in households across the country. [Around 2.4 million of those](#) were reportedly living with stepparents, rather than two biological parents.

With the [number of stepparents on the rise](#), it's important for families to feel connected regardless of their relation.

The initial post from 2022 explained that the poster's stepson was ungrateful for his new placement in a private school, and that he would always break the house rules. The teen wasn't happy about having to "surrender his phone" for family time, or handing over his social-media passwords to be snooped on.

The post detailed how the stepdad was ["sick of the disrespect."](#) The boundaries were there to control it, but they appeared to be straining the relationship even more. [Reddit](#) users were quick to counter his good intentions by highlighting how controlling he was being. Expecting the stepson to be grateful about changing to a new school was naïve.

A year after his original Reddit post, [the stepdad returned with an update](#) after the harsh comments gave him a new perspective on how he'd been treating the teenager. The poster wrote that he was deservedly "ripped to shreds" due to the "overly strict rules" he set out.

The update reads: "After reading the comments telling me how horrible of a stepfather I was, I felt sick. This might seem unbelievable but I was genuinely trying to do right by him and I was beside myself realizing that I did more harm than good.

"I eased up on many of the restrictions I placed, he no longer has to surrender his phone, and while we still do have family time, it's about once a week instead of every night. He no longer has a bedtime, and while his mom follows him on socials (I do not), I no longer demand his passwords."

The poster explained that the relationship between himself and the stepson has "drastically improved," and they've even gone to basketball games together.

"I am blessed with an incredibly smart, kind and compassionate stepson. Other kids may not have been so forgiving, and rightfully so," the update continued.

"I urge other stepparents out there to really listen to their stepchildren, instead of automatically trying to take over. You may not be as lucky as I was."

While the poster certainly went about it in the wrong way, setting boundaries is important for families to find balance and respect.

Parenting expert Dennis Poncher, founder of the non-profit parenting support group, Because I Love You, told *Newsweek* that families should create boundaries that everyone is happy with.

Poncher said: "Setting rules is so simple and yet at the same time, so difficult. It's important because, even though we think we are clear when talking to our children, they usually don't hear what we think we're saying.

"As parents, we learn early on to pick our battles, and so there cannot be an overwhelming number of rules—just what is most essential in your home. They must be rules you are willing to enforce," Poncher added.

"Once you have your rules set, it is time to think about consequences, both positive and negative. Do not forget to reward your child for following rules. This could be extra television time or a curfew extension."

Poncher also said that parents are entitled to ask for their children's social-media passwords if they're concerned about how it's being used or as a consequence of improper behavior.

After Reddit user u/nervousaccomplice74 shared his update, it quickly generated over 18,000 votes and more than 500 comments in just one week.

One person applauded both the poster and his stepson for changing their ways, writing: "Congratulations on all the progress. That's really nice to hear a good outcome. Good on your stepson for being big enough to forgive, and good on you for making the changes."

Another comment on the update reads: "This was such a sweet update, [original poster]. Thank you for doing that. I have stepparents myself and having them respect and value me as my own person made all the difference. Well done!"

If you have a family dilemma, let us know via life@newsweek.com. We can ask experts for advice, and your story could be featured on *Newsweek*.