

# CONTRACT PACK



## PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE CONTRACT PACK

So why did we create these contracts?

*We don't want you to try to manipulate your teenager's behavior with a document...*

*We don't want you to think you can sue your teenager if they breach this contract...*

*We don't have any illusions that just because your teenager signs this document they will magically be able to perform perfectly.*

That's not at all why we created these contract. In fact these are not contracts at all. They are communication tools.

You see whether you believe it or not, there is a negotiation happening in your home every day.

Your teenager wants freedom. You want to give them freedom, but the price for that freedom is to earn your trust.

There is really no reason to fight the fact that a Trust Economy exists in your home. In fact, if you will embrace it you might discover a whole new world of relationship with your teenager free from nasty negotiations.

These contracts clearly communicate between both parties what is required for each of them to get what they want.

## **THE TRUST ECONOMY**

The inside of a home is much like inside of our country.

In our country we have an economy where people want goods and they trade currency for goods.

There's a whole system built around that to make sure it's governed well.

We've been able to see at times in our history: when the economy breaks down, the country breaks down.

But when the economy is doing well, the country can succeed.

In the same way you're going to try to establish the economy in your home.

### **Step 1: Determine what teenager wants and what parent wants**

Now, the first part of establishing an economy is figuring out: what does my teenager want? And then what do I want?

Teens want **FREEDOM**

After 20 years of working with teenagers, I can tell you that many times what they want more than anything is freedom.

They want to be able to have freedom to say what they want to say, do what they want to do, and be around who they want to be around.

They want freedom.

They feel adulthood coming, and they just want to jump into it head first.

They want all the freedom of adulthood without any of the obligations of adulthood.

Parents want a teenager who is **TRUSTWORTHY**

If you're like most of the parents that I work with, what you want is to have a teenager that's trustworthy.

So what we have here is an *opportunity to create an economy* that can make your family strong.

How does each party get what they want?

To establish a trust economy, you need to communicate to your teenager, "Hey, do you want freedom?"

I want to make lots of freedom available to you. But the currency you use to purchase freedom from me is trust. If you can build trust, then you can exchange it for freedom."

Once that economy is established in your home, it sets a track for your family. A track to help you move toward building a close relationship.

Most of the fighting and bickering is handled when there is an understanding about the trust economy.

## **Step 2: Catch your teenager doing good**

The second thing you need to establish a trust economy is to catch your teenager doing good.

This is what builds trust, right?

Making the right choices, doing what is right, doing things that are responsible. When they consistently make good choices, you can now believe that they

know how to be kind

know how to be generous

know how to be safe

know how to be wise

understand how to act as an adult.

And that is exactly what you're trying to find them doing.

You want to catch them doing good.

Every time you see them doing something that is trustworthy, mention it to them but also try to find ways to reward it.

Say, "Hey, let's go to a movie," or "Here's some money to go to a movie with your friends and the reason why I'm doing this is I noticed the other day you cleaned your room without even asking."

That meant so much to me that I wanted to reciprocate and just give you a chance to go out with your friends because that really showed me trust."

You see, those kind of statements are not quite often given to teenagers, and when they are it makes a teenager's chest stick out and they believe, "I'm not such a bad kid."

That's what you want to do. You want to build inside of them this belief that they are, in their core: trustworthy.

When you give them more freedom each time you see trust happen. You might just see a whole new teenager.

In fact, I think one of the best things you can do as a parent is paint a beautiful picture of freedom.

My father did this for me when I was a young man.

He came to me when I was a teenager and said, "Listen, Jeremy, I want to offer you freedom. In fact, I could either be your best friend or your worst enemy. I know you want freedom. In fact, if you would follow my rules and follow the rules of this house and show yourself trustworthy, I'll give you so much freedom that by the time you're a senior in high school, you won't even have a curfew."

When he said that, my eyes got huge.

"Are you kidding me? I might not have to have a curfew? This is great!"

Then he said, "But at the same time, if you make a choice to break the rules of this house and to go against my rules and you break trust constantly, then I will war against you and take away your freedom with as much power as I have."

You see, my dad was setting up an economy.

He was saying the power was with me.

If I was going to choose to be trustworthy, I would earn freedom.

If I chose to break trust, I would earn consequences.

It was my choice to make.

You can give your teenager that same choice.

Paint a picture for them of freedom. Make it so beautiful that they can't resist it, and then teach them how they can earn it in the economy of trust.

This isn't just a principle for your family. It's a principle for life.

In our jobs, in our relationships, in every area of life, really there's an economy of trust.

This is a great foundation place for you to teach your teenager not just a family skill, but a life skill.

## **HOW TO BUILD BACK BROKEN TRUST**

Now that we've defined the Trust Economy, let's talk about its greatest enemy. What happens when that same teenager who is doing a great job, showing trustworthiness, and getting freedom all of a sudden is human and makes a huge mistake?

A mistake that disappoints you frustrates you, and even angers you.

You know what I'm talking about, right?

The phone call that you get from the principal or the parent who pulls you aside and says, "Hey, I don't know if you know this, but..."

You hear horrible news of something that your teenager actually did.

It's hard to refuse being lost in disappointment and anger.

## **YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE**

The Trust Economy can help you navigate the process of helping your teenager rebuild broken trust after a big mistake is made.

If you want to guard against anything with parenting a teenager, you want to guard against them believing they're a "Bad Kid."

### **Step 1: Express Disappointment**

Yes, express disappointment. You need to tell them that what they've done is not okay and you don't like it. That's a good thing to do.

### **Step 2: Offer Consequences With Little Emotion**

The next thing to do is to offer a consequence. Consequences for bad decisions are a fact of life. Your teenager learns so much when they face a consequence after a huge mistake.

The best way to offer consequences is with as little emotion as possible.

Emotion takes you away from the actual issue at hand. Your teenager focuses on your angry outburst rather than the lesson that stands to be learned.

I said, "as little emotion as possible" because I know you're human. There is no way to completely avoid angry outbursts and loud arguments. But if you can train yourself to react less and respond more, you will create a constructive environment instead of chaos.

### **Step 3: Give Them Hope**

This is the step that most parents miss when their teenager blows it big time.

Give them hope.

The way you do this is to say, "After this consequence is over, we want to watch your decisions and we're going to come back to you at some point to acknowledge that you've learned from this mistake. At that point you will have restored trust with us. Would you be willing to work with us to learn from this decision and move forward together?"

Then help your teenager come up with a measurable way to show that they have earned trust.

Don't just say, "One day, you'll be able to restore trust."

Tell them, "2 weeks. We're going to give you a 2-week window. If you can show us that you've learned from this mistake, we're going to come back to you and say as if it's never happened: trust restored."

Give them an amount of time that they can do.

Your teenager might be in such a bad season where you have to say to them, "You have 2 days and in 2 days if you can make good choices we'll restore trust."

### **You want them to succeed.**

At the agreed upon time, make sure to be faithful to meet with them and communicate, "Hey, you know what? We've watched you. Yes, it was horrible that all that happened. Yes, you did your consequence and you're through it now. And now we've watched you for a period of time, and we want to say to you: you're not a bad kid. You've learned from this. You can move on now. And now let's just keep getting back to earning trust and giving freedom. We want to give you freedom. We love you and we are rooting for you."

What a great opportunity!

When your teenager makes a huge mistake, what they need the most is the hope that it is possible for them to earn your trust again.

**When you establish the Trust Economy in your home, and your teenager has a way to earn trust and re-earn broken trust your family is set up to thrive and grow together.**