It's Cool to be a Little Uncool

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One of the biggest delusions of adult life is to perceive oneself to be a 'cool' parent. You try to be a friend rather than a jail warden. You wear what you think are funky clothes, watch the latest season of 'Vampire Diaries' and 'Student of the Year' with your teenager, memorise inane lyrics of Iggy Azalea's 'Fancy' and even try to master as many 'apps' on the smart phone as possible. Then you take it further – you extend curfew times, you don't go ballistic when they bring home an 'F', you allow them to pierce their eyebrows. But then you realise no matter what you do, you are the nagging, annoying parent, someone your child wants their 'space' from. So where are you going wrong?

Most parents these days want to be 'cool' in the eyes of their teenagers and their kid's friends. But not every parent knows the dos and don'ts that have to be adhered to, to qualify for this coveted position. Here are a fewbasic tips to avoid being dubbed as 'so uncool'.

Do not relate embarrassing stories of your child's potty training days in front of her friends especially those of the opposite sex.

Do not come to school trying to look funky by wearing faded jeans, T shirts with peace signs, bandana and goggles – this is the 2000s and you are not at a 70s theme party.

Do not hug, kiss or ruffle their hair in public, that is, in front of their peers

Do not take them with you to office parties or weddings where they will constantly text: 'I am bored out of my freakin' mind' to their friends.

Do not eat their secret stash of chocolate in that box in the bottom drawer of their desk. There is a reason they have to hide their sweets. Shame on you!

Do not try to secretly read their text messages and facebook chats. Chances are their phones are locked anyway so spare yourself the embarrassment.

Do not wear their favourite T shirt so that it has now become a size 'XL' from an 'XS'.

Do not say 'no' to them 99.97 percent of the time.

Do not make clothes from the same material as your child's or buy the same top from her favourite store.

Do not accompany them to parties or at hangouts with friends. Sitting at the corner table wearing shades will not help.

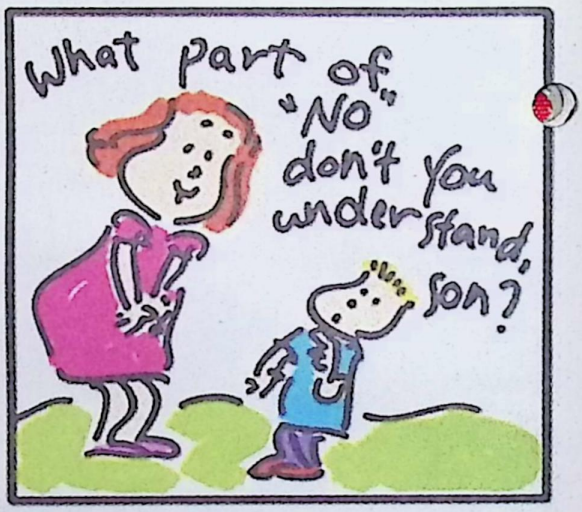
Do not call up their friends to ask whether they have a crush on someone or whether they have a boyfriend/ girlfriend.

Do not ever, ever, start sentences with 'When I was your age…'

Do not try to sing Iggy Azalea's 'Fancy' in front of them especially if they have company, when you hear it on the radio or someone's phone/iPod. In fact, try to refrain from any kind of singing whatsoever.

Do not pick up a fight with their classmate's parent at the annual function.

Do not try to talk to them about 'the birds and the bees' when they are about to start college. You have missed the bus –several years ago.



Do not talk about how brilliant, well groomed and well behaved your sister's kid is in front of your child.

Do not talk about famines in Somalia when they don't finish their food.

Do not criticize their futuristic hairdo, their lack of clothing, their lazy habits, their dubious 'special friend'.

Do not get enrolled at the same university.

This list could go on and on which indicates that there is no such thing as the 100 percent 'cool' parent. It is a bit like trying to untangle a grossly knotted up chain – just when you think you've got the loop out comes another unfathomable, untenable knot!

It seems the best way to get out of this vicious cycle with some dignity and sanity is to not try so hard. Kids, no matter what their age, secretly want their parents to be a little demanding, to tell them what to do and cushion them along the way. And if the parents know how to play their cards right by guiding their children without smothering their urge to be their own persons, they maybe on their way to more coolness than they could have imagined. ■