

From the “UNFAIR!” FILES

“I don’t know how to get across to my dad that when I ‘argue’ I’m just trying to show him my point of view. When he insults me I want to defend myself, but I just can’t. I feel really helpless.”

—Phil, 13

“My parents say I am too young to be in a serious (or unserious) relationship and that this boy I like is not allowed to call me anymore. They said they are being more protective of me than my brother because I am a girl. That really bothers me!”

—Leigh, 13

“No makeup, no laptop, and no music. No camera, no low tops, no short skirts, and no texting. No going out with my friends and no boyfriend. My life feels like a freaking prison.”

—Sylvia, 14

“I want to play football, but my parents won’t sign the permission slip. My brother messed up his knee playing, so now I’m not allowed.”

—Kevin, 11

“It’s midterms and I’m earning a failing grade in Spanish. My parents have threatened to move me to another school—meaning they would be taking away the few friends I have. I’m so mad at them right now.”

—Walt, 12

“My dad makes me so angry sometimes. He always thinks he knows what I am thinking. I just want to yell at him and tell him he doesn’t get it. But instead I nod my head and roll my eyes. Both ways I get in trouble.”

—Bethany, 12

Dealing with Unfairness

It can be tough staying cool when someone pushes your “unfair” button, but you can learn how. Up for the challenge? Try this:

- 1. Notice what’s going on with you.** When you start feeling like you’re losing control your chest may tighten. Your mind may start filling with fuel-ish thoughts.
- 2. Stop.** Slam on the brakes before you go off the deep end and do or say something that’s going to get you in trouble. Even if you’ve already said or done some things that weren’t great, it’s never too late to stop.
- 3. Close your eyes.** Closing your eyes blocks out the person you’re angry with and helps you get back in balance faster.
- 4. Breathe.** Inhale *slowly* and evenly through your nose. Then relax your mouth and exhale *slowly*. Repeat 5–10 times.
- 5. Decide.** Now that you’re calmer, think about the best way to respond to what happened.
- 6. Your challenge.** From now on, whenever you start to feel like you’re losing it, remember to breathe and put yourself back in control.