

Q & A: How do I not lose my cool with my kid?
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Question: “How do you get through the stomping, pouting, slamming door stage without losing your cool? I have two daughters, 13 and 14 years old (15 months apart) and I feel as though I have twins. Either one at any given time has their hormones out of whack.”

Answer:

First, you just may need to remove the doors from the hinges! Seriously, if a kid can't go their room without shaking the house, then perhaps they need to live without a bedroom door to see what it's like. The girls may show a bit more respect for property when they have to dress in the bathroom and can't have their normal privacy. But, it sounds as if the door slamming is just a symptom of a larger problem, and I don't like to blame it all on hormones. Yes, puberty can do some weird things to kids' emotions such as moodiness, impatience and becoming extra touchy. But, so can brattiness. With two of these critters living beneath one roof I would imagine that the daily dramas could make the producers of reality shows envious. What to do? First, sit down with the girls and let them know how their outbursts affect not only you, but their father and themselves. Even though throwing a whopper of a fit when frustrated may feel good at the moment, or be a knee-jerk reaction, it can have long-lasting effects upon the mood and comfort of the entire household. Realize that kids generally don't *lose* their tempers, they *use* their tempers. Tell the girls that if they are upset about anything that the appropriate choices are: take a time-out and try to cool off in their own bedroom first; or come to you for advice, a listening ear, consolation or for help to change the situation. Or, they may just have to learn to be frustrated for the moment and to realize that there isn't always a comfortable answer for everything. Sometimes our feelings get hurt, last year's blue jeans don't fit, or a teacher gave a less-than-expected grade at school. It happens. Reinforce that one's reaction to frustration is often more important than the disappointment. But, be sure to let them know that throwing a fit will not lead to your listening ear or comfort—it drives you nuts and you'll be taking away privileges if they can't discuss or display their emotions in a more civil manner. And, remember that they are watching you, and perhaps copying the ways that you handle frustration, moodiness or disappointment. Let them know that you, too, will be working to deal with your negative emotions more politely in the future.