



EXPERT
STRATEGIES
FOR
APPROACHING
YOUR TEEN'S
UNTIDY
PERSONAL
SPACE

HOW TO HANDLE YOUR TEENAGER'S *messy bedroom*

Maintaining a tidy bedroom is often a low-priority task for teenagers – much to the frustration of their parents! Psychologist Dr Bianca Heng from Creating Change Psychology (creatingchange.net.au) explains that there's a valid reason behind your teen's propensity for mess.

"The part of the brain responsible for organisation, planning and long-term goals is still developing in teenage years," explains Dr Heng.

"Teens are more driven by their emotions and in particular, seeking out pleasure and enjoyment. So any activity, ranging from sport to chatting with friends or gaming, will be considered far more important to them than the cleanliness of their bedroom."

BROACHING THE ISSUE

Some families are comfortable to take a "just close the door"

strategy when it comes to their teenager's messy bedroom. However, if the state of untidiness has reached a point where parents feel it needs to be addressed, then Dr Heng says there are positive ways to broach the topic – without resorting to unhelpful nagging.

"One approach is to pair cleaning and tidying with an immediate reward, such as an allowance or extra screen time, which adds an element of pleasure to the task," suggests Dr Heng.

"Parents could also try to catch opportunities for intrinsic motivation, by connecting a tidy room with something that's important to their child. For instance, impressing their friends or partner when they come to visit.

"Parents could also attempt a playful observation like, 'I imagine it must be hard to move around in this room. Would you like some help tidying up?' That way, teenagers feel their parent is trying to help, rather than criticise," adds Dr Heng.

INSTILLING A ROUTINE

The dream for many parents is that their teenager becomes self-

motivated about maintaining their own personal space. Realistically, Dr Heng says the only chance of this happening is if parents themselves model the behaviour.

"The self-discipline to clean one's bedroom needs to be taught by parents, and teens will require guidance to get started on creating helpful habits," she explains.

Dr Heng also suggests that families set aside a weekly time when all household members tidy their space.

"When the whole family are cleaning at the same time – parents included – then teenagers are more likely to do it as it seems fair."

On a daily basis, Dr Heng adds that it's helpful to give your teens one small focused task, rather than a general "clean your room" statement.

"Choose one thing like making the bed or emptying the bin. This will help create a regular habit – with the occasional parental reminder!"

Slow and steady wins the race, remember!

TEEN ORGANISATION IDEAS

PROFESSIONAL ORGANISER AND MUM-OF-THREE KRISTINA DUKE (@DECLUTTERINGDIVA.COM.AU) SHARES HOW TO HELP KEEP YOUR KID'S SPACE CLEAN

- Install an over-the-door rail or wall hooks to quickly and easily hang school uniforms.
- Use dividers to segment clothes drawers and shelves – anything that creates zones will help teens stay organised.
- Add labels onto shelves and containers to make it clear where things belong.
- Have a designated organiser station for important small items like school ID, transport card and notes.
- Maintain a large wall calendar to visually manage upcoming assignments, events and also plan ahead.

