

# Reasons Why Rules and Consequences Routinely Fail



Whether you have created a formal paper contract in the past or just agreed on something verbally, you have probably experienced failure for one of the following reasons. Take a moment to recall and record a situation where the agreement failed because of the following reasons.

## Unrealistic Expectations With Consequences That are Too Harsh:

These are often created in the heat of the moment, out of anger or fear. The parent hasn't thought through whether it's fair, or whether these expectations, along with the consequences for not meeting them, can be followed through on.

## When Parents Don't Agree:

See the Dream Parenting Made Real Course for more on this subject, the point being one parent can't hold boundaries and follow through on expectations if the other intentionally, or unintentionally, undermines their co-parent. (Remember the Bathtub Analogy.)

## Lack of Collaboration With the Teen:

Contracts often fail because teens are not genuinely involved in the agreement process, leading to a lack of commitment.

## Not Clear or Captured:

Often details of the expectations are haphazard, too many, or basically unclear. If they are captured on paper, the document isn't referred to again. (Remember the Covering the Golf Cart example.)

## Over-emphasis on Penalties:

Focus on punitive measures rather than positive reinforcement can lead to resentment rather than cooperation. You get what you focus on, so if it is heavy on the consequence, that negative energy creates resistance.

## **Set and Forget:**

Once the crisis has passed, parents take their eye off the ball and unwittingly teach their kids that the expectations they set are not relevant once things settle down.

## **Too Many Expectations:**

One of the reasons parents set and forget. There are too many things to track and follow up on, so parents become police rather than parents.

## **Acting With a Misconception of Control:**

If we think our job as a parent is to control, and we create an agreement from that place, we use levers of control rather than influence that focuses on teaching, collaboration, and explaining why we are asking for certain behaviors.

## **Static Rules Are Set and Not Reviewed:**

Contracts that don't adapt to changing circumstances or developmental stages can become obsolete or irrelevant, diminishing their effectiveness.

## **Ignoring Root Causes:**

Behavioral contracts might address symptoms of issues (like poor grades or misbehavior) without tackling underlying causes (like stress, peer pressure, or mental health issues).