



Beyond the Schedules

Seven steps to connect deeper with your teen and make homeschooling a joy.

Disclaimer: This particular guide is not endorsed or created by Kent and Amy, but the ideas for it came from their words and their work, and we want to give them credit for it. Flexi Solutions may have added their own spin to things that Kent or Amy may or may not support.

Many of the ideas for this 7-Step Guide were pulled from insights shared by Kent and Amy, who spoke at our homeschooling event last year. Before diving into this guide, we highly recommend listening to the [30-minute audio](#). Note: The audio starts at 1 minute and 35 seconds.

Feel free to download the audio clip to refer back to it frequently. For easier playback, use it while you go through these exercises.

Note: During the 30-minute audio, you'll notice the audio has been sped up. This is intentional, allowing you to absorb the content efficiently. The full, regular-speed version with images, pictures, and additional resources, can be found [here](#). Kent and Amy's segment begins at 5 hours, 13 minutes, and 12 seconds.

Step 1

Generational Context of Conflict

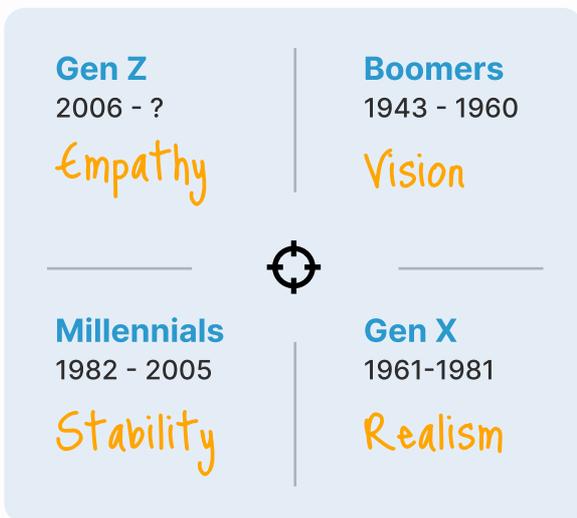
Understanding the Real Conflict

Before jumping to solutions or corrections, take a step back. Many conflicts stem from misaligned needs between generations. Recognize that your child may not be misbehaving—they might be overwhelmed, misunderstood, or simply needing to be heard.

Your 7th grader, likely born after 2006 and part of Gen Z, is growing up in a “winter season” of crisis (6:03-6:36), facing unique pressures like stress, anxiety, and device addiction (3:51-4:15). Kent and Amy explain that generational theory shows history as cyclical, with each generation needing different things (5:28-5:59). For Gen Z, “What they need right now is to be heard and understood” (12:48).



What Each Generation Seeks Now



Reflect on your child’s birth year and recognize they’re not wired like you—whether you’re a Gen X realist or a Millennial seeking stability (11:43-12:42).

Ask yourself:

- How does this crisis season (6:24) show up in my 7th grader? *Prepare by expecting their need for empathy over practical fixes, setting the stage for a connected year.*
- What did your child do that upset you?
- How did you respond in the moment?

Step 2

Identify Sources of Conflict

Lead with Empathy

Children don't always need solutions first—they need to feel understood. Slow down, listen with care, and respond with empathy. A simple “I'm so sorry that happened” can build trust and calm more than immediate advice or correction.

Small conflicts can escalate, like Amy's milk story (8:02-11:35), where a simple cereal mishap revealed a generational rift. Kent and Amy note kids today feel “disengaged... high anxiety... overwhelmed” (4:08-4:11), and homeschooling 7th graders often amplifies this with schoolwork or independence struggles.

Decode the Need

Now take a deeper look. What might have been going on beneath the surface?

Check any that might apply:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> They were tired or overstimulated | <input type="checkbox"/> They were anxious or uncertain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They felt unheard or dismissed | <input type="checkbox"/> They wanted your attention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They needed a break or quiet time | <input type="checkbox"/> They felt powerless or frustrated |

Ask yourself:

- What was their unmet need?
- How could I have responded to that need instead of just the behavior?

Step 2

Decode the Need (continued)

Observe your 7th grader this year—where do you clash? Is it over math lessons, screen time, or chores? Think of Amy’s Gen X practicality (“20 seconds is not hard,” 9:58) versus her daughter’s Gen Z reaction (10:15-10:26). Jot down one or two recurring friction points and consider if your realism clashes with their need to be heard. This awareness preps you to address tension before it derails learning.

flip the Script

Put yourself in their shoes -- What might your child say if they had the words?

Prompt:

“If I could speak from my child’s heart in that moment, I think they would have said something like...”

“Mom/Dad, I wasn’t trying to be _____. I just didn’t know how to handle _____. I really needed you to _____.”

Reflecting this way can soften your response and remind you that behind every behavior is a story, a need, or an emotion waiting to be understood.

Walk in Their Shoes

Think back to a recent time your child was upset, complaining, or melting down.



Write it down:

What was the situation? What did they say or do?
Did you fix it? Lecture? Brush it off?



Your typical response:

“_____.”

Step 3

The Loving Mantra

Lead with Empathy

Kent and Amy’s “loving mantra” tool (19:28-22:05) helps you move from frustration to calm, critical for a peaceful homeschool year. They say, “Think about what it is about your child that you want to remember” (19:38) to reset your focus.

The Loving Mantra

STEP 1: What do you want to remember about your child?

STEP 2: Create & memorize a short statement that captures that feeling and instantly resets your focus to the good.

STEP 3: Repeat your Loving Mantra anytime you start to...

STEP 1: Remembering your child:

- Is she still practicing/learning?
- Is he doing his best given his limited experience?
- What is her true identity?
- What is the higher truth about your child?

STEP 2: Resetting statement:

- What is beautiful about your child?
- What though uplifts you about your child?
- Is he drowning?
- Is she doing the best she knows how?

STEP 3: When to repeat:

- Feel irked, irritated or frustrated
- Feel that chemical reaction that indicates you are now operating from the Limbic System.
- Go into judgment or condemnation?

SAMPLE LOVING MANTRAS

- He’s drowning.
- He’s still learning/practicing.
- He’s doing the best he knows how.
- I always love my child.

Try it out!



Create the short statement for your 7th grader, memorize it and practice it daily—maybe on your bathroom mirror (20:59)—so it’s ready when conflict hits. For example, when your 7th grader resists a writing assignment, repeat your mantra silently to stay grounded and supportive.

Step 3

Lead with Empathy (continued)



Think back to your recent conflict from Step 2. Now rewrite your response using empathy first.

Try one of these openers:

- “That sounds really frustrating.”
- “I can see how that upset you.”
- “Wow, that’s a lot. I’m here.”

 Your empathy-first response:

“_____”



Optional Activity: Act It Out!

Grab a mirror or a willing partner (even a stuffed animal counts).

Say your new empathy response out loud.

focus on your tone-kind, calm, curious.

Track Your Responses: Use this tracker to celebrate small wins.

Day	Did I pause before reacting?	What did I say or do instead?
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Step 4

Build Empathy to Bridge the Gap

Empathy Closes the Generational Gap



First, we need to understand the differences in our generations (11:08-12:55) and why they create a disconnect between us and our children. Most of us are either Gen X or Millennials who are looking for realism and stability. However, what Gen Z kids need right now is empathy and to be heard, and then be given the solution after. There are still boundaries, but they should know that we are still on their side.

In the pool story (17:01-19:11), a mom shifts from annoyance to action, realizing, “They are struggling and we want to help them” (18:53). Your 7th grader might be “drowning” in puberty or social pressures, not just defying you.

Rising Tensions

When tension rises (e.g., they snap about a schedule), pause and imagine them flailing in the pool. Say, “I’m so sorry this feels hard—I get it” (inspired by 13:00-13:19), then listen. This builds trust and lets them know that you are on the same side.



Step 5

Manage the Negativity Effect

Why the Bad feels Bigger

Our brains are wired to notice negative things more than positive ones. It's a survival instinct—but it can distort how we see our kids. If we react from fear or stress, our tone might not match our words. Children feel this mismatch.

Your brain's "negativity effect" (14:47-15:40) spots flaws 10 times more than positives (15:27), pushing you to correct your 7th grader constantly. In other words, we are wired to be negative.



Counter this in your homeschool day. Notice when you're fixating on their sloppy handwriting or tardiness. Flip it—praise their effort or creativity first. If you feel triggered (16:44-16:58), step back and breathe; don't let your limbic brain (15:04-15:22) dictate the moment. This keeps the year encouraging, not critical.

Tracking Your Talk

For one full day, use the table below to track your corrective and positive statements.

Time of Day	Corrective Statement	Positive Statement
Morning		
Midday		
Afternoon		
Evening		

Step 6

Strengthen Connection for Learning Readiness

Conflict and Learning



Conflict blocks learning, as Kent and Amy note: “If we’re having conflict, they’re not going to be ready to learn” (23:02-23:04).

Use empathy and your mantra to reduce friction, like Kent did with his teen (23:19-25:03). After a tough day, sit with your 7th grader, hear their struggles, and only then suggest, “How about we try this book/activity?” (22:52). Plan regular check-ins to maintain this bond.

Spend quality time with your teen. Play a game, go to batting cages, or garden. While spending this time together, start with the following prompts:

“What was the hardest part of your day?”

Listen without fixing and just acknowledge. Say something like:

That does sound really frustrating. Thanks for telling me.”

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

-David Augsburger



Step 7

Ongoing Support and Adjustment

A Journey of Adaptation

Kent and Amy's story (23:19-25:29) about navigating a challenging moment with their daughter highlights how a simple mantra turned frustration into connection, proving that small tools sustain progress.

Commit to tweaking your approach as your 7th grader grows. If a strategy falters, revisit your mantra or conflict list. Take their advice: "Try what you've written... to have greater empathy and greater connection" (26:10-26:21).



Reflect monthly-- how's the connection holding?

What worked well this month?

What is something we can change for next month?

"We would like to try _____ next month."

Am I better connected with my teen now, than I was last month/year?

What can I do next to grow as a parent?