

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Well Grounded

Teen's Anti-Punishment Facebook Campaign Goes for Naught

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What Happened:

Earlier this year, 15-year-old Tess Chapin of Queens, N.Y., went to a party with her parents' permission—but came home an hour past curfew and with alcohol on her breath. Her parents grounded her for five weeks.

Tess thought the punishment was too extreme for what was, by all accounts, a first offense. So she launched a Facebook advocacy page: "1000 to get tess ungrounded." She hoped to get 1,000 people to sign up and petition her parents for leniency.

Tess nearly reached her goal a few days later, but when *The New York Times* picked up the story, the advocacy page surged with new signatories, blowing past Tess' goal. Many agreed with Tess that the punishment was too harsh. Other respondents told Tess she should be grateful to have parents who care enough to enforce the household's rules.

At least one of Tess' Facebook friends told her the crusade was a lost cause. "I love you," the friend wrote, "but your parents are not gonna unground you for convincing 1,000 people to join a group."

Her friend was right. Tess' parents didn't budge, and the girl now seems resigned to her fate. Try to learn about upcoming events for Tess' advocacy group, and a boilerplate message pops up: "1000 to get tess ungrounded does not have any upcoming events."

Talk About It:

What do you think about what Tess did at the party? Do you think her parents were too hard on her? Too easy?

Think about a time when you did something wrong—something you know you shouldn't have done. Did your parents punish you? How did that punishment make you feel? Angry at them? Angry at yourself? Embarrassed? Do you think they were right to punish you?

Some youth yell or cry when their parents punish them. Tess opted to start an online movement. If you were Tess' parents, how would you have reacted to her Facebook campaign? Would you have lessened her punishment? Increased it? Praised Tess for her creativity *and* added a week onto her punishment for being rebellious?

How hard is it these days to be a parent? Do you think your parents have an easier or tougher job than *their* parents had with them? If you could give them some advice on how to raise you, what would it be?

What the Bible Says:

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12).

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline

“Or be weary of his reproof,

“For the Lord reproves him who he loves

“As a father the son in whom he delights” (Prov. 3:11-12).

“When I was a son with my father,

“Tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,

“He taught me and said to me,

“Let your heart hold fast my words;

“Keep my commandments, and live.

“Get wisdom; get insight;

“Do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth” (Prov. 3:3-5).