A 16-year-old Ohio teen was in for an apparent rude awakening after calling 911 on her father for “theft of property.” In a now viral video (see [here](https://www.acsh.org)) captured by police body cameras, an officer is shown calmly discussing with the adolescent why her father is not wrong in having the right to take such an action. It appears she broke some rule set by him and the consequence was his taking possession of the device. Discussion ensues with the young woman that it is a privilege, not a right to have one to begin with as she attempts to plead her case and double down on her initial assertion explaining her mother bought the phone. The officer suggests she manage the original issue by doing what her father is asking of her as the best course of action to earn back the phone.

Is this just common sense? Or, as the Internet noise would have you believe the tale of one entitled teen? Either way, the name-calling, shaming and mockery that abounds in the public forum helps no one. The reality is there are many factors at play in this priceless teachable moment.
First, no one is perfectly behaved at all times and in this culture of immediate video capture and subsequent escalation, I would urge anyone to consider what they are glad wasn’t recorded in their youth before an age of such technological advance. This incident, if properly handled and framed, could really be a transformative one for the teen and her family. Understanding how they got to such a place that involved an abuse of the emergency system’s resources can be invaluable to consider. More trials and tribulations, as is the nature of life, are to come in all of our futures. Learning how to resolve conflicts through the least invasive means as a first step is essential to developing resilience, fostering adaptability and acquiring the necessary skills to become an independent, well-adjusted adult.

On this aspect, this is becoming a societal norm. In another piece (see here [3]), I focus on neighbors calling police on a kid for selling cookies and how this speaks to a greater societal ail. Due to the daily coarsening of civil discourse on mainstream and social media platforms, routine conflict resolution has gone out the window and this new path of instant gratification and intensification through direct contact with third party authority or obtaining often out-of-context “gotcha” video has supplanted a once very desirable trait.

Is technology, whether texting on the phone or interacting online, impairing our ability to cope with run-of-the-mill minor conflicts and effectively communicate with one another? If we have forgotten how to be neighbors or family members and are impotent at resolving the small stuff, then how will we manage the larger issues that are life-threatening, dangerous and inevitable as a part of life? Or, are we so addicted to strife and the accompanying notoriety in our social media age that we crave more of it from the start?

It is not a coincidence the source of this spat was a smart phone.

Then, there are the realities of adolescence. This stage of human development enables navel gazing, the testing of limits and a continued drive for independence. Teens see things as they impact them. They often feel invincible and empowered, especially with what adults might consider more unimaginable, even impossible dreams. They are more concrete than abstract in their thought processes, especially when under stress.

As we start to appreciate every shade of gray in our maturation toward adulthood, we garner deeper understanding. Though this brings with it a vibrant and rich life, it routinely is accompanied by a new focus on fears, not the fearlessness of our teen years.

As tempting as it is to be a little intellectually lazy and name-call the participant in the video, we lose an opportunity to identify and fix the likely multiple factors at play that caused the problem. Unless that is done, no one learns to evolve on a more ideal path forward and acquire the tools that better manage future crises when the stakes only get demonstrably higher. How we got here is the question to be answered, otherwise the mistake will be repeated again and again.

Children mimic what they see. The best gifts parents can give their children to set them up for future success are: leading by example and teaching them accountability in that there are consequences to our actions. These relationships of parent and child are symbiotic and interwoven. Issues that adversely impact one party do not occur in isolation.

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