

[close window](#)

## Messy rooms are just part of the growing up process

By DOROTHY SCHNEIDER  
[dschneider@journalandcourier.com](mailto:dschneider@journalandcourier.com)

April 11, 2007

The floor of Chris Mowery's bedroom used to be littered with clothes, books, wires, a stray rollerblade and lots of Legos.

"You couldn't even go in there," said Melody Mowery of Lafayette, Chris' mother, who said she's been battling with her sons for years over their messy rooms.

Mowery's 13-year-old son finally cleaned his room recently, "but it's only been two weeks and it's starting to get bad again."

Problems with messy rooms are nothing new for most parents. But many mothers and fathers get frustrated when no amount of rules, arguments or ultimatums can keep their child's room from turning into a pig sty.

Some parents have found the best way to deal is to let their son or daughter's room be sloppy -- but not unsanitary -- to give them some personal space.

"I have not encountered a teen that has a clean room, at least in the sense that it's organized the way an adult would. Their room is a reflection of their state of mind -- which is a total mess," said Christina Botto of Raleigh, N.C., who runs the Web site [parentingateenager.com](http://parentingateenager.com) and is a member of the National Parent Teacher Association.

"It's up to the parents how they want to deal with it, they just have to realize (the room) is a reflection of their teen," she added.

Botto, who has two children that are now in their 20s, said she's talked to parents who have all sorts of opinions on the matter. Some try to clean their child's room themselves, but often this can cause friction because the child sees it as an intrusion into their space. Even if it's tough, Botto recommends parents try to stay away from their teenager's room.

"Most teens are very insecure and are trying to develop their personality," Botto said. "So, if the room itself is the teen's territory ... it at least gives them control over their immediate surroundings."

Botto always kept one strict rule: no food or dirty dishes in the room. Though Mowery wants her sons to learn the importance of being neat -- "so their wives won't hate me some day" -- she decided awhile back that she couldn't keep cleaning their rooms for them.

"If you keep doing stuff for them, they're never going to learn for themselves," she said. "So now I just tend to shut the door (to their rooms), that way my part of the house looks nice."