

Talking the Talk:

Communicating With Your Teens



Talking to teens takes special skills. It isn't like it was when parents were teens. That is a classic line that teens use on their parents, unfortunately, it is true. Teens today live in a world surrounded by modern technology, drugs that weren't even thought of in their parent's generation and the pressure to accomplish and do everything. Talking to the teen of this generation may be more complicated, but it is a skill well worth learning.

Realize that there are times when your teen wants to talk to you. Unbelievable, but yes this may happen. If you know your child, you may spot the signs. Teens are all different so there is no one way to spot a teen that is looking for your adult conversation. Pay attention to your teen's actions moods and listen to their words. Your teen may just need someone to listen. This accomplishes several things. It helps your teen get whatever it is off their mind. It also helps get things out in the open. Listen to what your teen isn't saying as well as what they are. Look at their body language. Really looking and listening to them is helpful.



Listening is a big thing to your teen. While it may seem a small part in the communication puzzle, it is a big part of gaining that teen's trust. If they know you are willing to listen to them, they may be more willing to come to you again in the future. Listening without interrupting or putting in your opinion shows them what they have to say is valuable to you, that they are indeed valuable to them.

One of the best ways to communicate with your teen is to start young. Start talking, really talking, to your children when they are young. Establishing a relationship with a child who knows you are there to talk to them, listen to them and share with them, will help the relationship when they are a teen.

Though children and their outlook will change when they become teens, if you have established a good relationship with your child the more willing they are going to be to open up to you. It is establishing a habit of talking, instead of talking at them.

Many teens struggle with self-esteem issues. Knowing that they can go to you, an adult, and that you will listen to them, will help. Communicate with your teen on an adult level. They are in that between stage. They are not yet an adult, but they are learning how to be. Show them that they can communicate with you and perhaps others on an adult level. Don't talk to them as you would when they were a child.

Spending time with your teen is a good way to open the lines of communication. Spend time in activities that they enjoy and ones that you enjoy.



Family activities are great for getting a teen involved, but remember that they may need one-on-one time. Time where they can spend with a parent doing something. Non-pressure time. Time spent where they can be just who they are and not be pressured to talk or even think of things that are important or on their mind. Just spending time with your teen, building a bond with them. Find an activity you both can do together. It could be something as simple as a round of putt putt golf or maybe more of a sport to be learned, such as rock climbing. It could be taking them to a movie they have wanted to see. Show the teen you value your time with them and that you are willing to learn new skills and enjoy things with them.

Sometimes you must impose rules and guidelines for a teen. But if possible work through solutions and options with your teen. Let them come up with ideas for their problems. Talk through the pros and cons. Listen to their thoughts and ideas.

Walk them through the process of coming up with viable solutions to the problems they are coming into contact with. Teaching them responsible ways to communicate and work through issues is a life skill they will need. Helping them through this process, instead of finding solutions for them, gives them the confidence that they need. It also shows them that you respect their thoughts and ideas. It will open a conversation with them, and hopefully show them you are open in the future to other conversations. Find out about your child's activities. Take an interest in what they do. That doesn't mean you need to go out and be a football coach or listen to grunge music. If you can talk about the latest and greatest with your child

this may open another road to communication. Learning to talk about what is relevant to them is like learning to speak their language. Different interests come with their own jargon and terms. These can seem as foreign to adults as speaking Klingon. Learning their interests may give you vital clues to what your child is saying.

Different teens respond to different communication styles and activities. If one method doesn't work, be flexible enough to adjust your approach and try a new tactic. Each teen is different, even in the same family. An approach with your 17 year old, may not work with your 14 year old. Approach each as an individual. They have different interests and styles. They have different friends and vastly different communication styles.

However you have to approach your teen, open the lines of communication. Use whatever means that work for you and your teen. Be flexible and tailor your communication to the needs of your teen. That is what it is all about, learning to talk the talk of your teen.

