

Tips for Communicating With Teens

Listen

If you are curious about what's going on in your teen's life, asking direct questions might not be as effective as simply sitting back and listening. Kids are more likely to be open with their parents if they don't feel pressured to share information they may not be ready to. Even an offhand comment about something that happened during the day may be their way of reaching out.



01

Validate their feelings

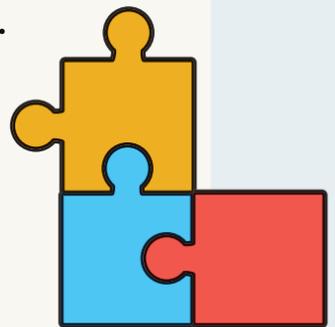
It is often our tendency to try to solve problems for our kids or downplay their disappointments. But saying something like "They weren't right for you anyway" after a romantic disappointment can feel dismissive. Instead, show kids that you understand and empathize by reflecting the comment back: "Wow, that does sound difficult."



02

Show trust

Teens want to be taken seriously, especially by their parents/caregivers. Look for ways to show that you trust your teen. Asking them for a favor shows that you rely on them. Offering a privilege shows that you think they can handle it. Letting your kid know you have faith in them will boost their confidence and make them more likely to rise to the occasion.



03

Don't be a dictator

You still get to set the rules but should be ready to explain them. While pushing the boundaries is natural for teenagers, hearing your thoughtful explanation about why parties on school nights aren't allowed, for example, will make the rule seem more reasonable.



04

Give Praise

Parents tend to praise children more when they are younger, but adolescents need the self-esteem boost just as much. Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is they still want your approval.



05

06

Control your emotions

It's easy for your temper to flare when your teen is being rude, but don't respond in kind. Remember that you're the adult and teens are less able to control their emotions or think logically when they're upset. Count to ten or take some deep breaths before responding. If you're both too upset to talk, hit pause until you've had a chance to calm down.



07

Do things together

Talking isn't the only way to communicate, and during these years it's great if you can spend time doing things you both enjoy, whether it's cooking or hiking or going to the movies, without talking about anything personal. It's important for kids to know that they can spend time with you, and share positive experiences, without having to worry that you will pop intrusive questions or call them out for something.



08

Share regular meals

Sitting down to eat a meal together as a family is another great way to stay close. Dinner conversations give every member of the family a chance to check in and talk casually about sports or television or politics. Kids who feel comfortable talking to parents about everyday things are likely to be more open when harder things come up, too.



09

Be observant

It's normal for kids to go through some changes as they mature but pay attention if you notice changes to mood, behavior, energy level, or appetite. Likewise, take note if they stop wanting to do things that used to make them happy, or if you notice them isolating themselves. If you see a change in your teen's daily ability to function, ask them about it and be supportive (without being judgmental). They may need your help and it could be a sign they need to talk to a mental health professional.

