

Communication Tips for Talking to Teens

Provide feedback and validate their feelings

- Restate what you heard your teenager say to demonstrate your listening and understanding. Then, clarify that you are understanding them correctly.
 - For example: “It sounds like you feel _____ because _____. Am I understanding you correctly?”
- Feedback offers an opportunity to clear up any ambiguous signals
- Give specifics when offering feedback; identify specific behaviors and not personalities or generalizations
- When your teenager shares with you, validate what they are feeling

Listen more than you speak

- Spend twice as much time listening as talking
- Active listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully.
- Let your teenager finish their thoughts and don't interrupt
- Do not immediately try to fix the situation, instead support them as they solve it themselves
- Listening does mean having to agree with everything said, but it is important to show your teenager that you respect what they have to say, and you want to hear what they have to say

Make time to spend together

- Find small times to have a conversation: over the breakfast or dinner table or dropping off or picking them up from various activities
- Make time for fun and laughter

Give them privacy

- Teens want and need their own space, and it can be as simple as knocking on their door and waiting for them to answer before entering their room

Take an active interest in their lives

- Watch the TV shows they are watching, listen to their music, attend their activities
- Keep up with their interests

Be a loving parent

- Adolescence is time when individuals struggle with their identity and need to feel loved
- Show them their love through physical touch, celebrating their achievements, listening to them when they have a problem and helping them solve it, and forgiving their mistakes
- Give praise

Ask questions occasionally

- Asking occasional questions demonstrate that you are listening and interested, but be careful not to ask too many questions or to take over the conversation with questions
- Too many questions can feel like an invasion of privacy to your teenager

Tell your teen what to do, instead of what not to do

Take a break when things get heated

- As an adult it is your responsibility to know when things are getting heated and to act appropriately
- Then, resume the conversation once both parties are calm

Show trust

- Look for ways to show your teen that you trust them
- Boost their confidence by letting them know you think they can handle something