



District I Parenting News

Extension Nutrition Program

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Have You Talked With Your Teen Today?

Does My Child Care What I Think?

Your child probably cares a great deal about what you think. You play an important role in shaping your teenager's behavior. Teens who say their parents warned them about drug use and set clear rules are less likely to use drugs. Parents' and teenagers' morals, future aspirations and self-control are typically quite similar. Talking encourages family togetherness and increases the likelihood teens will share parents' values.



What Kinds of Things Do Teenagers Want to Talk About?

Generally teenagers are interested in the following conversations:

- Family issues** Teens want to participate in decisions and be told about family problems.
- Controversial Issues** Teens have questions like "What does sex feel like?" or "What does it mean to get high?"
- Emotional Concerns** Teens want to know how you really feel about things.
- The Big Whys** Teens begin to have philosophical questions about issues like war and religion.
- The Future** Teens are curious and concerned about what they can expect from the future.
- Current Events** Teens have questions about what is going on in the world and in their community.
- Personal Interests** Teens really want you to show interest in their activities, music, sports and friends.
- Parents' Lives** Teens are curious about what things were like when you were their age, including emotions you had and mistakes you made.

How Can I Talk With My Teen? All she wants to do is go out with her friends and spend time alone in her room.

- Don't lecture, talk for hours, or ambush your teen.
- If your teen tells you a secret, keep it.
- Listen to her concerns and feelings. Respect her views.
- Stress that your teenager can and should make choices about his behaviors and is responsible for these decisions.
- Offer praise. Make a date to spend one-on-one time with your teen. Find something you both like to do.
- Tell your teen you love him. With all the changes he's going through, he needs to hear it now more than ever.

Are You Really Listening To Your Teen? To make sure you and your child are having the same conversation, communication should be interactive. Ask your teen what she wants to talk about. Teenagers often feel their parents aren't listening and dominate conversations. Many parents believe they are talking to their kids about drugs. The majority of kids don't remember these conversations. Parents need to be ready to talk when teens are.

Choose Your Battles. Typically, parents and teenagers argue over chores, curfew and school-issues that are not that important. Parents need to choose their battles and decide what is worth fighting about. What would really happen if your child didn't make his bed one morning? Wouldn't your energy be better directed towards issues like sex, drugs, or alcohol?

How Can We Resolve Conflicts With Our Teens?

- Establish ground rules so it's a fair fight.
- Agree to treat each other with respect.
- Listen to each other's point of view.
- Reach a mutual understanding.
- Brainstorm solutions together.
- Pick the options you like best.
- Arguments are common in families with teens. However, studies show that teens love their parents.



Source: Teen Talk, Univ. of Minnesota, Extension Service

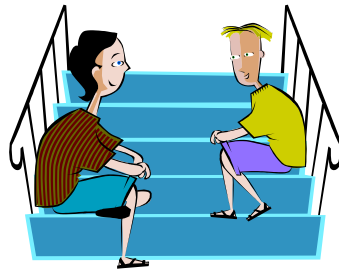
Parent-Child Activity Ideas

Getting To Know Your Teen Better

This activity is designed to help parents get to know your teen better through a casual interview about your teens' activities and interests. First fill out the answers yourself. Then ask your teen for a time that you can conduct your "interview". After you've heard your teen's answers you can share your responses and compare how close (or not so close) you were.

Tips:

- * Keep the activity on a positive note. Avoid judging your teen or making negative remarks about any of his/her answers.
- * If you have more than one teen, conduct your interviews separately. This will make each child feel more special.
- * Add some of your own questions, but don't get too heavy at this time (unless your teen initiates a weighty topic).



Parent's Questions:

1. Who is your teen's best friend?
2. What does your teen like about that person?
3. What does that person like about your teen?
4. What is your teen good at?
5. What does your teen worry about?
6. What do you do that drives your teen crazy?
7. How would your teen like to contribute to society, as he grows older?



Teen's Questions:

8. Who is your best friend?
9. What do you like about that person?
10. What does your best friend like about you?
11. What are you good at?
12. What do you worry about?
13. What do your parents do that drives you crazy?
14. How would you like to contribute to society, as you grow older?

Source: Active Parenting of Teens

Taking Time For Fun

It's easier to like someone you have fun with. However, often we forget about the fun part of being a family when schedules are busy. Enjoyable shared activities help break negative parent-child cycles and enhance positive ones. It can be as brief as ten-minutes or as long as an all-day outing. The key is to find something you and your teen enjoys.

For example:

- ⇒ **Throw a ball**
- ⇒ **Shoot baskets**
- ⇒ **Bake a fancy dessert**
- ⇒ **Play a game together**
- ⇒ **Go on an outing.**

