



Talking with Your Teen

Do you ever feel like you and your teenager can never have a discussion without someone ending up getting frustrated? It may be time to look at your communication methods. Good communication is one of the most important aspects of building healthy family relationships. However, parents and teens sometimes have difficulty communicating. For instance, adolescents want explanations for almost every parental decision and when they don't receive satisfactory answers, there is often a breakdown in communication. Discussions can become argumentative and combative. This is normal as teens learn to negotiate, compromise and work toward becoming young adults. Talking to your teen can be a great experience for both of you if you follow these guidelines:

- Try not to hear too much. Adolescents know that they can wear down most adults with repetition and persistence. Therefore, when a discussion reaches the "wheel spinning" point, end it.
- Avoid solving problems for your teen. For teens to succeed they must make their own decisions.
- Remember that a teen's self-esteem is fragile. They may be quick to interpret what adults say as disrespectful, so think before you react to situations.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Find time to talk but avoid a "20 questions" drill about their day as soon as they walk in the door.
- Apologize when you make a mistake.
- Listen, Listen, Listen. If your kids see you as someone who will not listen they will stop talking. If necessary count to 100 before responding to avoid giving unwanted advice or lecturing.
- Pick your major issues; don't make everything a big deal.
- Approach the teen years as an exciting challenge. Patience, love and positive communication will lead to strong and rewarding lifetime relationships.
- Remember to tell your children how much you love them. Let your teens know that they are an important part of your life and that the world is a better place because they are in it.

Virginia Satir, a family therapist said, "The greatest gift I can receive from anyone is to be seen by them, to be heard by them, to be understood by them and to be listened to. Each of us should be open with others about their ideas, wants, needs, joys, and hurts. Each of us should listen to others with our hearts as well as our ears." Remember, teaching youth the importance of using open and positive communications is a gift that will keep ongoing for generations to come.

For more information on raising teens contact your local University of Minnesota Extension Service office.

Source: *Positive Parenting of Teens*, University of Minnesota Extension Service

For more information on parenting call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 and request a catalog of available topics.

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