Teens and Parents:  
Tips for Communicating with each other

Tips for Teens

• Look your parents in the eye when you are speaking. This makes you look more grown up, confident, and increases the likelihood they will hear what you are saying.
• Talk for yourself. Don’t let others talk for you. No one will express your thoughts, feelings or ideas as well as you.
• Work on controlling your body language: Rolling eyes, heavy sighs and other emotional reactions take your parents attention away from what you are saying.
• If upset, take time to cool down before trying to talk. We don’t talk, think or hear clearly when we are upset.
• Think about what it would be like to be your parent. This won’t change what you want, but helps you understand your parent’s reactions. Which will calm you down and help you speak clearer.

Tips for Parents

• Listen to your teen before responding. Let them know you heard what they said, consider it and then respond.
• Remember what it was like when you were a teen. This can help you understand their situation without setting aside your job as their parent.
• The best communication will happen on the spur of the moment, when you are acting as Taxi or grabbing a bite to eat. Take advantage of those times together and talk.
• Teens are in the midst of figuring out what they want and learning how to manage their newly intense emotions. They need time and experience to accomplish these tasks, so set your expectations appropriately.
• Reign in your emotions. You too are experiencing some new and intense emotions. Fear, (of pregnancy, drug use, etc) disappointment and rejection.
• Let your teen know about the mistakes you have made. Just because you did something as a teen does not give them license to do the same thing.
• Remember you had to learn many things by doing them.
• Put aside the teacher role once in awhile. Listen to their opinion and ideas recognizing that they aren’t going to act on every idea. Besides, they can repeat your concerns and desires verbatim.

Tips for Both

• Time your conversations. Don’t wait until you are upset; don’t try to talk when you are busy, tired or hungry.
• Listen to what is being said to you, take it in and then give your perspective.
• Repeat what you heard in your own words. Did you hear what the person wanted to say?
• Begin your statements with the word “I” not “you”. “I feel hurt when you talk to me like that,” rather than, “You never talk to me like I am human”.
• Pay attention to your reaction inside. If you’re upset, take time to cool down. We don’t talk or hear very well when we are upset.
• Show respect for each other’s uniqueness. Once in a while, put aside the fact they are your parent or child, and listen like they are someone else.
• Say you are sorry.
• Admit that the other person may be right. Or may have a better idea.
• Do it the other person’s way once in a while.
• Show your appreciation for each other. Notice what each is doing right.
• Be aware of your tone of voice and leave the attitude outside. If you can’t, take time to cool down before beginning the conversation.

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