

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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