

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEENAGER... YES, IT'S POSSIBLE!

If you are the parents of a teenager, you may at times feel as though you are not living on the same planet as them! Don't worry, this is completely normal! Adolescence is a period of significant changes for teens as they slowly begin to detach from parental authority. It is important to not give up and to always keep the lines of communication open with your teenager. Communication is the foundation of every relationship, but the art of communicating isn't always easy.



Effective communication involves active listening and an openness from all parties involved. Keep in mind that certain attitudes can be obstacles to establishing good communication. For example, a teen may find it difficult to speak with a parent who wants to control every situation or who consistently lectures his child or is very critical. The same may be true for a parent whose teen is hypersensitive, does not listen, shows disrespect or is uncommunicative. As a parent, it is your responsibility to initiate communication with your child. Here are some tips to help you establish and maintain an open dialogue with your teen:

Talk with your teen. Take the time to talk about his interests, plans for the weekend, future goals, etc. and not only about tasks that he needs to do (studying, washing the dishes, cleaning his room, etc.).

Listen. Active listening is key to good communication. Teens want their parents to listen to their stories, concerns and feelings. If they feel listened to and supported, they will be more inclined to discuss things with you.

Treat your teen with respect and don't dismiss his feelings or opinions. Listen to your teen's point of view with an open mind and try to find ways to discuss and acknowledge your differences without judging. Remember that your child is different from you and you need to respect him as a person, however, as his parent, he must respect you as well.

Respect his opinions and choices. It is okay to disagree without becoming derisive or mocking your child's decisions. Adolescence can be a trying period for some teens as they are building their identity and slowly coming into their own.

Avoid lectures. If your teen's stories spark a lecture from you, he'll be less likely to share with you in the future. Express your concerns, but know that it's normal for teens to want to experiment. Be up front about rules and consequences.

Spend time with your teen. Try spending quality time every day with your teen by engaging in activities that suit his age and interests. Shared experiences (meal times, going shopping, driving to school, helping them look for their first job etc.) help to build feelings of trust and respect that forms the basis for open communication. Your teen will learn that you are available to listen either when he is having a problem or when things are going well!

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Ask rather than demand. Avoid the need to want to control every situation and try not to be too harsh with your teen. Instead of imposing a curfew, ask your child what time he will be home. If you believe that this is too late, try to negotiate a compromise.

Step away. If a conversation becomes too heated or emotional, it is a good idea to step away. When everyone has had the time to calm down, try to resume the dialogue.

Give your teen meaningful responsibilities. Ask your teen to perform tasks around the house; i.e. mowing the lawn, shoveling the driveway, etc. He will feel more involved in family life.

Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a perfect parent! It is normal to feel overwhelmed at times. Step back, take a deep breath, and wait until you feel ready to deal with the situation. A sense of humour can also be very helpful during these times and choosing one's battles can go a long way in maintaining a healthy and harmonious relationship with your teen!

Remember, you don't have to go through this alone ... if you require additional information or assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the Missing Children's Network at **514 843-4333**.

Useful resources

Tel-Jeunes

1 800 263-2266

www.teljeunes.com

Kids Help Phone

1 800 668-6868

jeunessejecoute.ca

Ligne Parents

1 800 361-5085

www.ligneparents.com

Première Ressource (Parents Help Line)

1 866 329 4223

www.premiereressource.com

