

Talking with your Teen

Tips for Parents



When children become preteens and teenagers, they start seeking more independence from their parents. This is a good thing! But they still need their parents' support and guidance. Here are some tips to help parents talk to their teenage children in ways that will encourage healthy communication and allow them to feel supported.



Sons

- Try not to fixate on what you see as his deficits; focus on his strengths.
- Be accepting and non-judgmental.
- Show genuine interest in your son's life without being intrusive or overbearing.
- Eye contact SHOULD be optional.
- Feed him first—it can lessen his irritability!
- Ask direct, but open-ended, questions such as:
“Tell me about the best and worst parts of your day,” or “Did things go well with your English teacher today?”



Daughters

- Pick the right time—Midnight on a Friday after a hectic week is probably not going to yield a productive conversation.
- Be accepting and non-judgmental.
- Drop the expectations—don't dwell on what “should be.”
- Be present—remove distractions like your phone—and use respectful listening—let her finish no matter how long it takes.
- Stay calm if you want her to keep coming back to you.
- Share your stories. Girls often love to hear about how other teens survived something difficult and lived to talk about it.

When talking about difficult situations, conflicts and the feelings that come with it, it can be easy for us to fall into defense mode. Whenever approaching your teen (or anyone else for that matter!) using an “I-statement” is one way to communicate with them in a way that will be more likely to be heard and understood by your teen and evoke a positive response from them.

I feel (Feeling word: hurt, frustrated, disappointed, scared, etc.)

when (Non-blaming statement of what happened.) because (This is how it affects me.)

and I want or need (Specific request of what you want them to do differently.) .