

Be There for teens



TAKE THE TIME TO

BE PART OF YOUR TEEN'S LIFE



But they also say it can be a time of fun, growth, adventure, sharing, understanding, and learning. Research shows that one of the best things you can do for your teens is simply to be there for them.



Parents of teenagers describe the teen years as a time of change, fear, rebellion, moodiness, disrespect, and frustration.



Family Health Information Line
1-800-942-7434

It can make a real difference

Here are ten tips to help you focus on the positive and build a stronger and more enjoyable relationship with your teens:

1. Tell your teens that you love them and show them through your actions.

Teens need to know that you love them. Never assume that they know. Tell them often and show them by giving them space to grow, succeed, and even to make mistakes they can learn from. When they make mistakes or do things that upset you, it's still important to let them know you love them. Try saying things like, "I love you, it's your behavior I don't like."

2. Give your teens the gifts of time and attention.

Be there for your teens. Take an active interest in their activities (go to their sports events, school functions, music performances) and try to include them in yours. Set aside specific times for one-on-one activities and give them your undivided attention. If your teens want to talk and you are in the middle of something, try to stop what you are doing and listen.

3. Want to know what your teens are doing? Learn to listen and listen to learn.

Getting your teens to talk to you can be hard. One way to get them talking is to ask questions that lead to more than a "yes/no" answer, and then listen when they talk. Ask them how they feel and help them to describe what they are feeling. Every day you can find times for talking with your kids (at the dinner table, in the car), but you may also want to set aside special times for one-on-one conversations.



In any case, be ready to listen when they are ready to talk. When you listen, the reward may be that they will talk to you even more about the things that are important to them. Also, listen to other people involved in your kids' lives (their teachers, coaches, friends, parents of their friends). They can all tell you something about your kids that you may not know.

4. Set an example. You're the greatest influence on your child's life.

Be the kind of person you want your teenager to be. Talk to your teen about what you believe and what you expect of him or her. Show that you are responsible for your actions and keep the promises you make to your teen. Then set a good example. Remember, kids learn by watching.



5. Parenting is a tough job. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Being a parent can be hard work. As your children grow and learn, you are also growing and learning as a parent. Don't be afraid to admit there are things you don't know or understand. Talking to friends, other parents, or your own parents can be helpful. Asking for help only means that you are trying to be the best parent you can be.



6. Set rules and live by them.

Part of your job as a parent is to create a safe environment for your kids. Even though teens won't say it, limits actually make them feel safe and loved. To create a safe environment, tell your kids what is acceptable behavior and help them to develop self-control. Sit together as a family to set rules and discuss what happens if they are broken. Talk about why the rules should be followed, and once they are set, work together to live by them.

7. Talk to your teens, even about the uncomfortable things.

Talking about uncomfortable things such as feelings, relationships, sex, or drugs can be hard. Your teens may act like they know everything, but don't be fooled. It is your job as a parent to help them learn how to handle difficult situations. So, be ready—know the facts and what you want to say. Sometimes you won't have the answers to your kids' questions. That's okay. Just be honest and tell them when you don't have the answer. Then go find it together.

8. Praise your teens. Tell them when they are doing a good job.

Praise your teens for the good things they do. Be specific about what you are praising them for and give your praise as soon as they earn it. For example, instead of saying "you're a good kid," tell your teen, "I am proud of the way you handled that situation this morning." Telling them you're proud helps build self-esteem and is more effective than criticism.

9. Help your teens set goals.

Encourage your teens to think beyond today. Get them talking about the future, what they want for themselves and what it will take to achieve their plans. Show your teens that you support their goals by being there to guide their decisions. Most importantly, expect your kids to succeed.

10. Remember, you're the parent, they're the teens.

No one ever said that raising kids is easy. There will be times when you will have to make difficult decisions concerning your teens—decisions they won't like. But remember, they are teens, not adults, and they still need your help and guidance in handling all the problems and feelings they face.



You are not alone. Help is available for parents of teens.

If you have questions about raising your teens, or if you want to know more about programs and services in your community, call the Family Health Information Line at **1-800-942-7434**.

