

How to Help Your Teen to Talk to You

Most parents would love to have better communication with their teen and we know that God calls us as parents to effectively love and train them. I feel strongly that if parents learn how to listen well, they can achieve this kind of relationship their teen.

Here are some ideas to consider.

Help her talk to you. Your teen does not naturally know how to communicate well with you. She will need *you* to initiate and take the lead in learning how to relate together.

Encourage him if he starts to communicate. We are often tempted to defend or interrupt when a teen says something angry or irrational. Instead of getting angry, see if you can calmly get to the truth of what he's saying by leaning forward, looking at him and letting him know he can keep talking.

Actively listen. If you want to be close to your teen you have to get them talking. Most teens will talk if they know you will listen without judgment. This means that whenever they try to communicate, make sure you understand what they mean. If you don't ask them for an example or give them an interested "what do you mean" type of question. You may see this result in a whole string of communication. Keep listening! Then ask them if they feel understood. Do this before giving your own opinion or explaining yourself about anything.

Refrain from criticizing, blaming, nagging or lecturing. These kinds of things drive them away. Ask yourself, "Is what I'm about to say going to push him away or draw him in?"

Make her feel loved and respected by acknowledging her perspective. No matter how crazy she sounds, she likely has some legitimate reason to feel the way she does and she needs you to hear it.

End with sharing. After your teen feels understood and respected (ask them if they do), it is possible to teach, share, impose consequences, or solve problems. Just make sure that it doesn't turn into a lecture.

If you or your teen would like more help, please contact us.