



CONVERSATION TIPS With your Teen

Talking with teens can be challenging, but effective adult/youth communication can provide the support and guidance they need. The following key tips will help you talk with your teen or pre-teen in a meaningful way.

- **Don't lecture.** The focus should be on sharing ideas and discussion.
- **Encourage your teen to talk.** Ask open-ended questions instead of “yes” or “no” questions (“What do you think about ...?” “Why do you believe that?”). Find areas of agreement. Praise them when they make a good point.
- **Listen.** Give your teen your undivided attention when they are speaking. Don't interrupt them. Show that you care about what they have to say.
- **Don't criticize.** If you disagree with your teen, first ask them why they think that way. Listen closely and discuss the pros and cons. Often, this process may cause them to change their position on their own. If you still disagree, explain why in a calm, nonjudgmental manner and correct misinformation respectfully.
- **Be honest.** Don't be afraid to tell your teen that you feel uncomfortable about talking about a particular subject, or that you aren't perfect and have made mistakes yourself, or that you don't have all the answers but are willing to find them.
- **Be clear and specific.** For instance, if you're talking to your teen about the importance of respectful behavior in a dating relationship, ask them in what ways a person could show respect on a date. Listen to them, then share your ideas.
- **Be supportive.** If your teen tells you about a serious problem they have, respond in a supportive way. While the issue they raise may make you angry, upset, or fearful, the fact that they shared it is a sign they trust you to help them. Responding in a calm, supportive way sends the message that they can come to you when they're in need.