

# Bridging the Gap: Staying Connected with Your Child

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# Adolescence

is the age at  
which children  
stop asking

questions

because they  
know all the

answers.

# As a parent, do you:

- o Worry that you are not doing enough?
- o Struggle with embarrassing issues?
- o Seek ways to reduce power struggles?
- o Want to do everything you can to be an effective and competent parent?
- o Find yourself exhausted and overwhelmed?
- o Long to be understood?



Parents of  
adolescents  
unite....  
or at least  
commiserate.

# First Things First

1. Parents Need to Be Comfortable Being In Charge
2. Limits With Love Is The Key To Good Parenting
3. Find the “Comfort Zone” of Involvement
4. Unplug and Tune In



5. Make Time For Downtime

6. Tame The Critic

7. Children Need You More Than Stuff

8. Grow Thyself

# What gets in the way? (for kids)

- o Worried about how parents would react
- o Parent/caregiver didn't take time or didn't have time to listen
- o I was scared they would judge me
- o I was trying to avoid a lecture
- o I just didn't know how to bring it up – awkward!

# What do we know about teens?

- o Teenagers face many pressures that adults do not take seriously.
- o To some degree, you can expect teens to be moody and self-centered.
- o Self-doubt is constant.
- o While teens want to be treated like adults, it is important for parents to provide structure and limits.





# Middle School Memories

## Raise your hand if...

- o You had a crush on someone during MS/HS
- o You openly talked about your feelings for that person with your parents
- o Your parents could have made it easier for you to open up to them

# TEACH Teens Through Talking

- o Take a minute to relax with your teen
- o Empathize how complicated life can be
- o Acknowledge their feelings and needs
- o Connect by actively listening BEFORE sharing your own thoughts
- o Help them problem solve when they're ready

# The TOUGH Stuff

- o Bullying
- o Alcohol and drugs
- o Sex
- o Social Media
- o Stress
- o Peer Relationships
- o Academics



# *Communicating With Your Teen*

o Something to think about...

o Think of role models or mentors who had a positive effect on your behavior and feelings. What did these people do to have this effect?

o Now think of a time when someone, especially someone you expected to care, did something to have a negative effect on your behavior or feelings. What did this person do or not do?

# *Communicating With Your Teen*

- o The way you talk with your teenager affects the way they feel about themselves.
- o When you talk to your teen in helpful ways, they feel good about themselves and about others.
- o When you talk in harmful ways to your teen, they feel bad about themselves and about others.

# *Communicating With Your Teen*

- o Let your teen know you accept them through your words and actions...
- o Let your teen know you accept them – no matter what!
- o Acceptance is love.
- o You can accept your teen just as they are, as a person of value, even though you may not approve of certain behaviors.
- o Acceptance doesn't mean approval.

# *Communicating With Your Teen*

What is the importance of good communication?

- o Good communication helps teenagers develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. It makes life with them more pleasant.
- o Learning to talk with teenagers in a helpful way may be difficult, but it is worth the effort.

# Staying present through changes and challenges

## o PRESENCE

- o Be open to what is happening
- o Be aware of what is happening as it's happening
- o Be receptive to our own inner mental sea
- o Attune to inner life of another person

## o Two way street—UNDER CONSTRUCTION





# Staying present through changes and challenges

## o CONNECTION

- o Resist urge to fix and instead embrace resonance
  - o Requires letting someone's internal feelings enter us and change us.

## o Connect, Respect, Protect

- o Start with connection
- o Respect by exploring TOGETHER possible risks/rewards
- o Protect by keeping communication lines open

# Talk the talk AND Walk the walk

- o Make time together
- o Don't rush in if you hear something you don't approve of
  - o Need to maintain a safe place for teens to talk with us
- o Respect teens ideas, thoughts, and beliefs
- o Help teens make sensible choices
- o When you get mad, don't blame or accuse

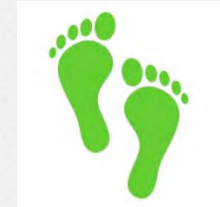


# Talk the talk AND Walk the walk

- o Avoid negative labeling (of your teen and/or their friends)
- o Say what you want your teen to do (instead of what you don't want)
- o Acknowledge your teen's STRENGTHS
- o Set reasonable limits
- o Respect your teens privacy, while staying knowledgeable about what is going on
- o Take an active interest in your teen's friends



# Talk the talk AND Walk the walk



- o Listen, really LISTEN.
- o Take the L - O - N - G view.
  - o Don't treat minor mishaps as catastrophes.
  - o Pick important issues so home doesn't become a battleground.
- o Don't say, "I know how you feel". Teens regard their feelings as unique.
- o Never imply that feelings don't matter or will change. Teens live in the present.
- o Don't judge. State facts, not opinions when you praise or criticize.
  - o "This report card is all C's and D's. How do you feel about that?"

# Talk the talk AND Walk the walk



- o Praise efforts, not just accomplishments
- o Rules should be consistently applied
- o Find an activity you enjoy doing together and pursue it.
  - o If your invitation is declined, keep asking.
- o Teach your teen to make good decisions by encouraging independence and letting him/her make safe mistakes.
  - o Don't step in unless you have to.

# Disciplining Your Teen- DON'Ts

1. Don't discipline/yell in front of their friends.
2. Don't yell. Use a firm voice and clear expectations.
3. Don't just use consequences.
4. Don't engage in power struggles or let yourself be manipulated.
5. Never hit your teen.



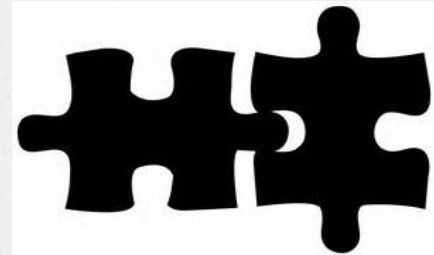
# Disciplining Your Teen- Do's

1. Engage in discussion rather than lecture
2. Work with teen to set consequences
3. Make sure consequence is linked with the behavior
4. Focus on rewards and strengths, not just consequences
5. Make sure your teen knows you love them



# Finding Time to Connect

- o Increasing demands on our schedule = less quality time with our adolescents
- o Mealtime can be a time to reconnect
  - o Phones off/No interruptions
  - o Equal time for all family members to talk
  - o Ask your teen specific questions
  - o Tell them about your day
  - o Make mealtime fun--
    - o Don't bring up "touchy" subjects





# Master the Art of Listening

Every communication has 8 components:

1. What you mean to say
2. What you actually say
3. What the other person hears
4. What (s)he thinks (s)he hears
5. What (s)he means to respond
6. What (s)he actually responds
7. What you hear him/her say
8. What you think you hear



# How Was Your Day?

Thoughtful way  
of reconnecting

You left in a big “huff”,  
I hope you are feeling better

*I'm really interested in  
what happened today*

Spare me the details

# Eye of the Beholder

- o How we (and our teens!) respond depends on what we perceive to be the intent of the questioner, our mood, our energy level, and our willingness to share information.
- o Good listening means understanding, communicating and acknowledging other people's feelings (both good and bad).

# Barriers to Good Listening

- We listen faster than we speak—our minds wander, instead of fully concentrating.
- We listen in spurts.
- We hear what we want to hear.
- We believe what we want to believe.
- We “tune out”.



# Overcoming the Barriers

- o Don't act like you are a mind reader or assume your teen knows what you are thinking.
- o Don't let your own thoughts get in the way of what your teen is trying to say.
- o Try to resist chronic “busy-ness”. Stay in the moment.
- o Pay more attention to language. Ask for clarification if you aren't clear what is being said.



# If all else fails....

- o Give yourself and your teen a BREAK!



# LISTEN. Connect. LISTEN.

- o Teen's fierce need for independence does NOT mean he can't stay connected to you.
- o Listen. Empathize. Keep advice to minimum.
- o Be available when your teen wants to talk.
- o Do NOT try to remake your teen.
- o Welcome your teen's friends.
- o Keep track of "goodwill balance".
  - o Need at least 5 positive interactions to balance every negative.





Let's Practice !!!



# Stop. Breathe. Respond.

- o As you think about these situations, consider the following questions:
- o 1. What is your initial (gut) reaction to the situation?
- o 2. What family value, if any, is compromised?
- o 3. What key message do you want to pass to your child in this situation?
- o 4. What methods and words would you use with your child in this situation?

# Scenario 1

- o Alcohol in your Home – It's the holidays and you plan to make some fudge with your 8th grade son. The recipe calls for a tablespoon of rum so you dig out the bottle of rum you bought last year for this recipe. When you look at the bottle, you see there's about an inch of rum left. What do you do?

## Scenario 2

- o Bullies – You are driving your son and a few of his friends to an activity. As they talk, the name of a classmate comes up in the conversation. One of the friends starts to ridicule this classmate, the others agree this person is “such a loser” and the boys laugh. What do you do?

# Scenario 3

- o Parties – After listening to her beg and beg, you agree to have a big Halloween party for your 7th grader. She invites all her long time friends from elementary school and many of the new ones she has made this year. It's 9:30 p.m. and the party seems to be a success. As you squeeze your way through the crowd in your rec. room you think you smell pot. What do you do?

# Scenario 4

o James is frustrated and saddened by the comments his high school peers are making about his sexuality. Furthermore, it appears a group of male students are creating fake e-mail accounts at Yahoo.com and are sending love notes to other male students as if they came from James—who is mortified at the thought of what is happening

# Scenario 5

- o While borrowing your child's phone, you see a text. It is a suggestive love note written to your child. The note says "You are so hot, I can't stop thinking about you. When can I see you?"

# Shout out to ADAMH board



Parent Workshops are possible thanks to  
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