

# Connecting With Your Teen

Teens have a lot on their minds, from homework to hormones to how they fit in with their friends. They need to know you're there for them. But they're also trying to assert their independence, which can make connecting with them a challenge.

Here are some tips to keep you connected:

- **Create time, without distractions, for a conversation.** Turn off the TV and put away your phone for a few minutes every day. It'll reassure your teen that when they need you, they'll have your full attention.

- **Listen instead of lecturing.** Rather than rushing to offer advice, be a sounding board. Ask questions to help your teen work through their feelings.

- **Ask your teen for help understanding their experiences.** It may be difficult for them to explain what they're going through, but if they take the time to try, it will benefit you both.

- **Ask for your teen's opinions.** Not only will it help you understand your

teen better, you'll show them that you respect them and genuinely care what they think.

- **Withhold judgment; give your teen a safe space to express emotions and feelings.** Be open-minded about the person your teen is becoming, and let them know that you're always available to listen, without judgment or criticism.

- **Pay attention to your teen's reactions.** Rather than pressuring your teen to talk, simply observe their actions and reactions. Take note of what helps them open up and what makes them pull away.

- **If you're concerned about your teen's health or safety, let them know.** Explain that you are monitoring them because you care about them. Be honest and transparent, and communicate from a place of love.

- **Encourage your teen to develop their own solutions.** Besides offering a great learning experience, this shows your teen that you believe in them, which will ultimately build their

confidence and sense of autonomy.

- **Stay in touch and spend quality time together.** Consider your teen's schedule and take advantage of opportunities for simple togetherness, whether it's washing the dishes or the drive to and from guitar lessons. They'll come to rely on these moments to bring up the things that are on their mind.

- **Connect by finding common ground and similar interests.** Shoot hoops in the backyard. Go camping together, or start a family book club. Volunteer together. Create a ritual out of whatever works best.

- **Send your teen one text a day that includes a positive statement.** This gives your teen the affection they need while you respect their space. It may seem small, but each positive interaction strengthens your connection.

*Information provided by the Masonic Center for Youth and Families, a nonprofit organization in Covina that offers therapeutic services for children, adolescents, young adults, and their families.*



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