

Spotlighting Teen Issues

for
Teens

Communicating With Your Parents

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You may just need a little help relating to your parents, or you may need to talk to them about something difficult. Either way, read on!

Opening a dialogue is not as frightening as it may seem, and it doesn't have to be the adult who starts the discussion. Teens can open the lines of communication, too. As the saying goes, "talking is a two way street." If there is something on your mind, if you are feeling confused or if you just need to talk, there is always some trustworthy adult willing to listen. Your parents, your aunts and uncles, a teacher or guidance counselor, even your grandparents — there is an adult you can turn to. They may not like what you are saying and may even get mad; but if you stay cool and stay on topic, they will listen. Choose an adult you know will listen before reacting, take a deep breath and make the ever so important move of communicating. You'll be glad you did.

There is a lot to be learned from listening to adults. They have been through the teen years and have the gift of hindsight in making their judgments. Remember that your parents were teens in the 60s and 70s, eras known for some pretty wild antics and open attitudes. These are not adults who are clueless about the lures of sex, drugs and rock 'n roll. When they offer advice think about what they are saying and where they are coming from. They aren't out to ruin your fun or stop you from having a life. Even the most conservative adult has your best interests at heart. Before deciding that everything adults have to say is bogus or that it is out of touch with the times, take a moment to really hear what is being said. You will be surprised at how much sense adults can make.



Here's How to Start

1. Find a time that you and your parents can be comfortable and relaxed together.
2. Make sure no one is focusing on something else (paying bills, playing Playstation, making dinner, watching TV).
3. Be persistent! These first two steps might take some effort and patience.
4. If you just want to shoot the breeze, try to bring up something they're interested in. Ask them questions about their day (they love this!).
5. If you have something specific you want to talk about, let them know what it is.
6. If they react to what you tell them, listen to them. Don't react back!
7. Let them finish and don't interrupt. Ask them to do the same for you.
8. When you feel like you've told them what you wanted to, thank them for listening.
9. If you feel like there are still things that need to be talked about, set up a time with them to talk about it another day.

Tips

Show them respect by focusing on the conversation, looking them in the eyes, and by not being sarcastic or rolling your eyes.

Be honest. Honesty builds trust. And life is good when your parents trust you.

Stay cool. If you can stay calm when things get heated up, you will show them that you are becoming an adult.

Resources

- Izenburg, Neil. 2006. *Talking to Your Parents or Other Adults*. Kids Health. www.kidshealth.org
- Fontenelle, Don. 2005. *Keys to Parenting Your Teenager*. New York. Barron's Educational Services.
- Fontenelle, Don. 2000. *Increasing Communication Between Parent and Teenager*. Family Education. www.life.familyeducation.com



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the Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs/>

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