



5 steps on communicating with your teenager

Parents, take time from your schedules to talk with your teenager on a regular basis. As much as your schedules permit but make the time even if it is only once a week for an hour or so to get ice cream or a snack somewhere. Preferably go away from the house (it will make it easier for your teenager to open up to you in a neutral environment) and ask open ended questions (questions they can not be answered with a yes or no only) about their lives, friends and share personal stories with them. This is the time to hear their hearts on situations and for them to hear your heart on current events, family values, your heritage, and all the things that will reveal to them that you are not just a parent but a person that loves them and really has their best interest at heart. Remember the most important thing is to be yourself and do not try to be cool, just be you.

1. Define the topic - Think through what you want to talk about and decide what you want to get out of the conversation...what is going on with a friend, grades, not cleaning the room, what are they saying in the music...etc.
2. Pick the right timing – Find time when you are both free, not a time when they are focused on a video game or talking on the phone. Try to set a time so the conversation can be focused on your topic. You could say, “I have some things I want your opinion on...Could we find some time this evening to talk?”
3. Talk Clearly – State clearly what you are thinking, feeling or concerned about. You might start the conversation by saying something like: Lately I’ve been concerned about..., or lately I’ve been confused about... and then say as clearly as you can what is on your mind.
4. Ask for What You Want and ask for their opinion – This relates to step 1...Do you want to help your teenager, or do you just want them to listen and do what you want them to do? This will help bridge them from adolescence to adulthood.
5. Listen – Don’t get caught up in thinking what you are going to say. That will stop you from listening to what is being said to you. Also, by not listening the answer you get may not be what you are expecting and that makes the conversation useless.

If you were not able to get everything out in one conversation remember it is important to follow up with another conversation as new thoughts and feelings come up. You might want to start this by saying, remember when we were talking about..., well since then I’ve been thinking...