

Connecting With Your Teen



What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore. But teens still need their parents' love, support, and guidance.

What You Might Be Seeing

Normal teens:

- Crave independence
- Question rules and authority
- Test limits
- Can be impulsive
- Make mature decisions at times, and childish ones at other times

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make room in your schedule for special times as often as you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Tips to keep in mind:

- **Have family meals.** If it's impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child's schedule.
- **Share "ordinary" time.** Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what's on his or her mind.

- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.** Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Look for chances to learn about your teen's latest hobby.
- **Get to know your child's friends.** Knowing who their friends are is an important way to connect with your teen. Make your home a welcoming place for your teen and his or her friends
- **Be interested.** Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you'll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents, too, when possible.
- **Set clear limits.** Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and *be consistent* in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.

Remember:

Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don't forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

This tip sheet was created with information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting> you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.