



Parent Health Connection

T I P S F O R P A R E N T S

Communicating with your Preteen

Your child is growing more independent each day. It is important to find ways to strengthen the bond between the two of you at any stage of development. It is not always easy, but it is worth it!

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Having a close bond with your child will really pay off, especially as he enters the teenage years. Good communication takes lots of patience and practice. Talking, listening and understanding what is being said is a two-way street. By understanding each other's perspective, you'll communicate more easily and you'll be able to solve problems together. Whether your child is upset because he has lost his running shoes or because he is feeling peer pressure, he needs you to listen to his concerns. When a child knows his parents are there for him, no matter what, he can talk without fear about mistakes made or issues that may be confusing.

HOW DO YOU KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN?

Listen without judging or lecturing

Sometimes this is difficult. If you react angrily, your child may not come to you again. Let her know that even when you are worried about her behaviour, you're still on her side. Effective listening is a skill that

anyone can learn! Remember, listen with your full attention. Turn off the television, put down the paper and let your child know by your actions that they have your full



attention. Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. Is your daughter distressed, excited or relaxed? Sometimes a child may test the waters by talking to you about a distressing idea like bullying or drinking and drugs. This is not the same as doing it. If you have a preteen or teenager at home that is talking to you, even about alarming issues, it's a good sign! It means that she trusts you enough to share concerns.

Try to understand your child's perspective

Things always look very different from an eight-year-olds' point of view, who has limited understanding and experience of the world. As adults, sometimes we forget that children really cannot foresee the consequences of their actions the way we can.

Maintain a positive attitude toward your child

Remind your children of all the things they do well. As parents, it becomes too easy to comment on mistakes, but children need to hear that you notice their efforts and accomplishments - every day.

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For further information contact
Health Connection
1-800-361-5653

parenting is the most important and rewarding work you will ever do!



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T I P S F O R P A R E N T S

Honest communication of our feelings is a gift to our children. It is not something to feel guilty about.

For more information contact

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or visit

www.york.ca

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It's all in how you say it!

Try to avoid questions that might make children feel that they are being put on the spot. A comment like "Not another bad report card?" sends a negative message about your expectations for your child and will probably put him on the defensive. Instead you may try asking "How do you feel when you get Cs?" It leaves some room for a real discussion of the problem.

Invite, but don't pry

There are times when your children won't want to talk to you at all. Try not to pry, but be available when they need you. Some children find it easier to talk in the relaxed quiet moments before bedtime. Some open up in the car or over dinner. Sometimes the real issues come up after a warm-up discussion about sports or computer games.

Share yourself

You can be a role model to your children by appropriately expressing your opinions, interests and feelings. It is important however to be careful not to overburden them with issues beyond their understanding. Children will know that you respect them enough to share your thoughts and this will invite them to do the same. Also, by sharing yourself, their self-esteem will be boosted and your relationship with them will be strengthened.



Roadblocks to Good Communication

- Criticizing
- Ridiculing
- Monologues
- Being condescending (speaking baby talk)



Communicating with Respect

Learning how to communicate in a respectful way is critical for anyone wanting to have a close relationship with their children. Respect for children means listening to them and taking seriously what is being said. Respect lets them know that we care about them. Also, when talking to children, talk with the same amount of attention and concentration you would give to one of your friends. Sometimes you may have to accept what the other person says, even though you may not necessarily agree with it.

Good communication helps people form healthy relationships by doing everything from solving problems and developing humility to learning about the world and themselves.

Resources

Cole, E., *Parenting For Life Series - You and Your Preteen, Getting Ready for Independence*. The Psychology Foundation of Canada and Kodak.

Shapiro, S., Skinulis, K., and Skinulis, R., *Practical Parenting - A Common Sense Guide to Raising Cooperative Self Reliant and Loving Children*.

Usher, C., (1999). *Parenting Pre-Teens - They're All Originals*. BC Council for Families.

Information obtained from Parenting for Life Series: You & Your Preteen, The Psychology Foundation of Canada

