

Communicating with Teenagers

Keeping the lines of communication open during adolescence is a key to helping those involved get the most out of this challenging time of life.

A group of high school students in an English class at James Madison High School in Madison, Wisconsin, listed some ways they would like adults to communicate. *Their advice:*

- Spend time with us...Let us “just talk.” And you “just listen.”
- Ask us “What do you think?” about different things. Give us time to “think about it” then, let us respond. Don’t feel like you have to fill the time with talking.
- Let us form our own opinions about some things. Chances are they’ll be a lot like yours.
- If we have a major problem, help us solve it. Don’t solve it for us; if you do, we’ll never learn how to function as adults.
- Give us a chance to disagree with you without thinking that we’re “talking back” or don’t know what we’re talking about.
- Don’t pressure us to achieve all the time.
- Praise us when we do well.
- Don’t try to be our “friend.” Just be yourself. We want you to show us how to be an adult.
- Tell us you love us even if we act like we don’t want to hear it.
- Be honest with us. We all know what it’s like to be lied to.
- Don’t yell at us. Nothing makes us want to fight back more.
- We love to hear about your teenage years. These stories don’t always have to teach a lesson—they’re fun.
- Never stop talking to us. You’re the only ones we can count on for reassurance and love.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Information, cited in *Parents make the difference!*, The Parent Institute, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039