

Respectful Communication

Respectful communication is essential to having positive relationships and to a child's development. Good communication involves listening and conversing in ways that make children feel valued. It also models appropriate behaviors for your child to exhibit with others. Here are some tips on how to help your pre-teen or teen learn how to have respectful and clear communication.

Pre-Teens

Staying connected with your pre-teen child is part of good ongoing communication. You can stay connected and build your relationship with your child by using unplanned, everyday interactions. This is when you make special time to do things together that you both enjoy. Here are some ideas for planned and unplanned connecting:

- Regular family meals
- One-on-one time with your child
- Fun family outings
- Family meetings to discuss and work out problems

Listening and Communicating

Active listening can be a powerful tool to improve communication and can build a positive relationship with your child. Children of all ages learn through modeling, and the best way to teach active listening to your pre-teen is to practice doing it yourself. Active listening is a way of saying to your child, "Right now, you're the most important thing to me." Here's a quick guide to active listening:

- Stop what you're doing and give your child your full attention.
- Look at your child while he or she is talking to you.
- Show interest and show you're trying to understand.
- Listen without interrupting, judging, or correcting.
- Concentrate hard on what your child is saying.



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Negotiating

Negotiating can help your pre-teen learn to think through what he or she want and needs and communicate this in a reasonable way. While learning to manage conflict and learning to negotiate, difficult conversations will arise. You will need to have these conversations in the pre-teen years. Building good communication includes tackling difficult conversations together. Here are some tips for handling difficult conversations:

- Stay calm. Plan a good time to talk when you are feeling relaxed and have no distractions.
- Reassure your child that you do want to discuss the issue.
- Let your child know you're happy that he or she wants to talk to you.
- Avoid being critical or judgmental or getting emotional and try to think objectively.
- Actively listen to your pre-teen.
- Thank your pre-teen for coming to you.

Teens

As your child enters the teen years, he or she is becoming more independent and have learned many good and maybe not so good communication skills. Look at the Pre-Teen guide for tips on active listening and tough conversations. When your child reaches the teen years, he or she may develop friendships and romantic relationships. Here is how you can help your teen navigate respectful communication.

Friendships

To teenagers, friends become increasingly important, and positive, accepting, and supportive friendships help teenagers develop positive relationships now and when they become adults. You can play an important role in helping your teen manage peer relationships.

- Building a warm and caring relationship with your teen can help your teen with his or her own social relationships.
- Praise teenagers when you see them being fair, trusting, and supportive. This encourages them to keep working on those positive social traits.
- Getting to know your teen's friends can show your child you understand how important his or her friendships are. Encourage your teen to have friends over and give your teen and his or her friends a space in your home to hang out.



Teenage friendships can sometimes take a turn towards toxicity, and your teen may need your help to understand this. Here is how you can help.

Explain to your teen that if your friendships aren't making you feel good, they aren't good relationships.

Teens need to know to watch out for signs of bad friendships. Some signs of bad friendships include put-downs, manipulation, exclusion, and other hurtful behavior.

Talk to your teen about what good friends do, such as looking out for each other, caring about each other's feelings, and treating each other with respect.



Romantic Relationships



Romantic relationships are a major developmental milestone for your teen. Every teen is different, and every family will feel differently about when romantic relationships will be allowed. Romance will happen, and understanding what respectful, good communication will help your teen form safe and healthy relationships. Talking to your teen about romantic relationships is one of those difficult conversations. It is essential to start setting ground rules early. Before your teen starts making romantic connections, ensure your teen understands what they are allowed to do and what the consequences will be for breaking these rules.

Adapted from: https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/communicating-relationships/communicating/teen-communicating-relationships

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website https://thrive.psu.edu, and sign up today!