

## HOW CAN I...

# Build and maintain a warm and positive relationship with my child or teen?

### Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **Be a good listener.** So often, kids just want a caregiver who will connect by offering their undivided attention.
- **Make family routines fun.** Create enjoyable family routines together: It could be game nights, movie marathons, or something else — but make it routine to share in doing something you all enjoy. These shared moments create memories and strengthen bonds.
- **Talk openly and honestly.** Listen to your child without judgment and offer support when they need it, setting clear boundaries and providing age-appropriate advice. It's a delicate balance, but it ensures that your kids will feel safe and supported while learning to make responsible choices.
- **Respectfully agree to disagree.** Even when you don't agree with your child, acknowledge their thoughts and feelings. Showing respect for their opinions will build trust.



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video on this topic.

## 7 Tips for Communicating with Your Teen

1. **Listen.** If you are curious about what's going on in your teen's life, asking a direct question might not be as effective as simply sitting back and listening to what they have to say. Even an offhand comment about something that happened during the day can be their way of reaching out.
2. **Validate their feelings.** When your teen is upset about something, even if it seems small to you, saying something like, "I'm sure you'll feel better soon," can feel dismissive. Instead, show kids that you empathize by reflecting their sentiments back: "Wow, that does sound difficult."
3. **Show trust.** Look for ways to show that you trust your teen, like asking them for a favor or volunteering a privilege, like a video game night. Letting your kid know you have faith in them will boost their confidence and make them more likely to rise to the occasion.
4. **Give praise.** Teenagers might act like they're too cool to care about what their parents think, but the truth is, they still want your approval. Looking for opportunities to be positive and encouraging is good for the relationship, especially when it is feeling strained.
5. **Control your emotions.** It's easy to get mad when your teen is being rude but responding with anger usually makes a situation worse. Count to ten or take some deep breaths before continuing the conversation. If you both are upset, hit pause until both of you have had a chance to calm down.
6. **Do things together.** Talking isn't the only way to communicate. Spend time with your teen doing things you both enjoy — whether it's cooking or hiking or going to the movies — without pushing them to talk about anything personal or serious.
7. **Share regular meals.** Dinner conversations give every member of the family a chance to check in and talk casually about sports, television, or politics. Kids who feel comfortable talking to their parents about everyday things are more likely to be open when it comes to harder conversations, too.

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

[Tips on Helping Your Child Build Relationships Zero to Three](#)

[The Scaffold Effect: Raising Resilient, Self-Reliant, and Secure Kids](#)  
Book by Dr. Harold Koplewicz

[Conversation Tools for Talking to Teenagers](#)  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

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