

YOUR School Connection

SCHOOL:

DATE:

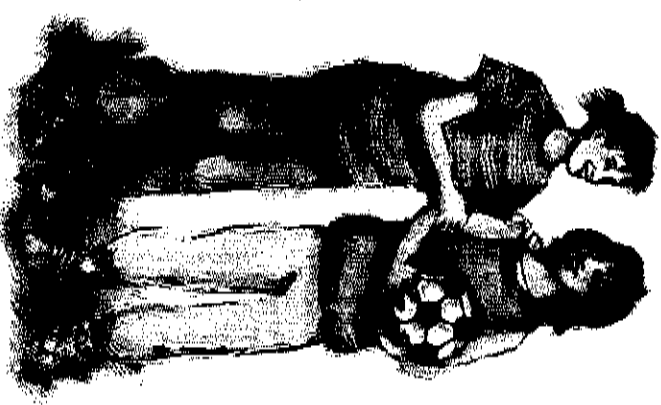
Talking to Your Teen about Effective Communication

Communication is at the center of almost everything teens do, and yet, effective communication is a skill with which many teens struggle.

When trying to relate with others, teens face many challenges, including miscommunication or disagreement. Some teens face negative forms of communication from peers, including gossip, rumors, ridicule, and disrespect.

On the positive side, teens may be called on to lead peers in sporting activities or other groups, to collaborate with teachers on special projects, and to perform in paid employment, which offer excellent opportunities to practice good communication.

Teens often learn communication skills by watching the behavior of the adults around them. By being a good role model, you can demonstrate positive communication techniques that will help your teen prepare for adulthood. In addition, parents who practice effective communication skills with their teens will avoid more miscommunication and assumptions, and gain mutual respect and understanding.



What Are the Key Things You Should Tell Your Teen?

Effective Communication: Effective communication requires that you listen, make good eye contact, speak clearly, mean what you say, ask questions if you don't understand, be honest, don't make assumptions, respect others' opinions, and make sure your body language is consistent with your message.

Listening: To become a better listener, you can be quiet, focus on listening instead of thinking about what to say in response, make eye contact, don't make assumptions, and ask questions if you don't understand.

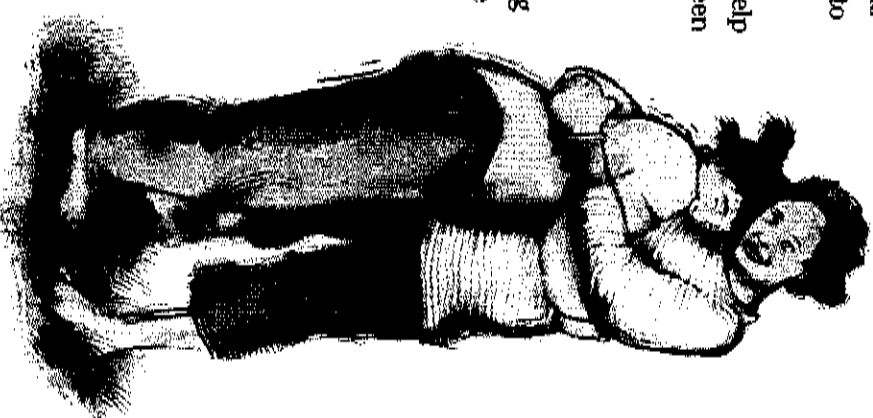
Body Language: Body language should be consistent with your verbal messages. For example, if you apologize for something, you might say "It's okay. I forgive you."

But if you look down at your shoes, frown, fold your arms, or quickly walk away, the other person might think you are being defensive or avoiding the situation.

I-Messages: When offering your personal feelings about an issue, use I-messages instead of you-messages. You-messages can put others on the defensive. I-messages let others know how you feel and how their actions are affecting you. I-messages also show that you are taking responsibility for your own reactions. Using I-messages is especially important when you are trying to resolve conflict. For example, instead of saying "You make me feel so stressed and anxious when you yell at me," say "I feel stressed and anxious when you raise your voice."

How Can You Support Your Teen in Learning Healthy Communication Skills?

- Let your teen know that you are available if he or she wants to talk. Find a time when you know your teen will be around, and check in to see how things are going.
- Find out what your teen is interested in and do a little research to help start a conversation with him or her. This will not only show your teen you are interested but also allow you to demonstrate good listening skills.
- Listen. This seems simple, but it's easy to overlook. As parents we want to share our experience and solve situations. Before responding or offering advice, try to be silent, maintain eye contact, and reframe your teen's message in your own words. This will help ensure that you have understood your teen correctly.
- When conflict arises, stay calm and let your teen know that you respect his or her difference of opinion. This way, your teen understands that it is okay to respectfully disagree on some issues.
- Use positive communication with your teen as much as possible. Affirm your teen often, such as reminding your teen how much you love him or her. Notice the positive things he or she does and comment on them out loud.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

Parenting is hard work. Listening to your teens and understanding how they feel are not always easy, especially in times of conflict. We're talking about effective communication in the classroom, and we're here to support your efforts to deal with this subject at home.

If you need help, please feel free to contact
