



HOW DO I...

Help my child through the challenges they face in the teen years?

Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **Being a parent is hard, and parenting a teen can be particularly difficult.** Be ready to start communication by acknowledging their feelings and struggles, making it clear that you're there for them without judgement.
 - **During this time of transition, you may feel like the distance has widened between you and your child.** But you can try to meet them where they're at, whether that's taking an interest in what music they listen to, what TV shows they watch, or what sports they play. These actions can demonstrate that you are invested in them. Investing in a strong relationship can help your teen make safe decisions.
 - **When your teen opens up to you about a difficult situation, first assess what they need in that moment.** Ask them if they're looking for suggestions or if they just want someone to listen. This opens the door for them to ask for and accept advice.
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- Scan to watch our video on this topic.**
- **Don't be afraid to lean on your community.** Encourage your teen to develop relationships with other adults who can help mentor or guide them, whether that's a trusted family friend, teacher, coach, or family member.

9 Tips for Helping Kids Through the Teen Years

1. **Maintain a strong relationship.** It's important to build a strong foundation with your teen so they know they can trust and come to you when they need to.
2. **Keep an open line of communication.** Let teens know through words and actions that you are there for them. And be prepared to have tough conversations.
3. **Don't take it personally.** The teenage years are when kids start to stretch their wings and exert their independence. This is developmentally appropriate, but it's easy for a parent to feel rejected. Try not to take it personally.
4. **Be a good listener.** It's easy to jump into problem-solving mode when your child has a problem, but sometimes they just need a place to vent. Before offering advice, ask if they'd like to hear it and be prepared to respect their answer.
5. **Encourage mentorship.** Sometimes teens shut out anything resembling advice coming from their parents, no matter how sound it may be. If you're having trouble connecting with your teen, look for other trusted adults in their life who can offer guidance as well.
6. **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.
7. **Be observant.** Teens won't always be open about their struggles, so parents should also look for signs that something is up. Changes in mood, behavior, energy level, or appetite could be red flags.
8. **Manage your emotions.** It's easy for your temper to flare when your teen is being rude, but remember that you're the adult and adolescents are less able to think clearly when they're upset. Try to remain calm and respond with the respect and kindness.
9. **Be their safety net.** It's natural for teens to experiment and make some mistakes before they leave the nest. When this happens, help them learn from their misjudgment so they'll be better prepared to take care of themselves when they are on their own.

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

[Principles of Parenting: Communicating with your Teen](#)
Auburn University

[Teens and Young Adults Resource Center](#)
The Child Mind Institute

[Talking to Your Teen About Healthy Relationships](#)
Children's National Hospital

The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders by giving them the help they need to thrive. We've become the leading independent nonprofit in children's mental health by providing gold-standard care, delivering educational resources to millions of families each year, training educators in underserved communities, and developing tomorrow's breakthrough treatments.