

Communicating With Your Teenager



A common complaint of teens is that their parents don't listen. So it's a good idea for parents to remember that listening and hearing are two different things. It isn't easy. Some of these suggestions from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services may help:

- When your teen wants to talk, give your undivided attention. Don't read, watch TV or clean the kitchen.
- Respond courteously and calmly. Respect brings respect. A pleasant tone of voice pays far greater dividends than a stern one.
- Avoid making judgments. Putting yourself in your youngster's place is challenging, but necessary if you're trying to understand your teen. A teen who's criticized won't open up next time.
- Keep the door open on any subject. Teens don't discuss things that make their parents uncomfortable, but they sometimes pay a price if they're uninformed.
- Allow a swap of ideas. Often, young people's ideas are far out, but not set in stone. Even if you're alarmed at what you hear, listen first, before you express your point of view.
- As much as possible, focus on nice things instead of negative ones. Everybody needs acceptance and admiration.
- Give everybody attention fairly and equally.
- Consider having a family conference so everyone has a voice in family affairs.



If the stressors of your teenager seem to be getting the best of you, consider calling Continuum EAP at (402) 476-0186 or (800) 755-7636. Sometimes talking through your concerns with an EAP professional can be an effective strategy to help you get a handle on parenting.