

## Talking With A Teenager – Your Child’s Side

1. Try to find a medium level of comfort with your child, somewhere in between the teacher and the best friend. In all honesty, it is impossible for either one to work all of the time.
2. Try not to confront your child in front of their peers. Especially today, public humiliation often means “the end of the world”. Using it as a tool won’t make them remember the lesson, just the time you embarrassed them. Simply put, this could lead to plain bitterness.
3. Keep in mind that your child’s problems are important to them, no matter how silly or juvenile they seem to you as an adult. Boy problems or clothing dilemmas might appear to be a waste of time in your 30+ years of experience, but your child is just that – a child. Making their problems your problems will end up allowing them to feel comfortable with talking to you about anything.
4. Remember that it’s not war or a competition – an argument really isn’t about winning or losing. If you know that your child is speaking reasonably, don’t be stubborn. Your child will still respect you if you admit a mistake you have made – we should know before long that you are not perfect.
5. Try not to raise your voice, as all it does is escalate the tension. Staying calm and talking rationally is much more productive than emotional breakdown. If you are a regular screamer, your child could just tune you out – in all likelihood, it’s something they know how to do really well. If you become a regular time bomb, it will be hard for them to take you seriously.
6. Attempt to understand your child’s side of the story. Cutting them short when they’re trying to explain their feelings is a lack of respect, as would be if they did it to you. Don’t assume that you understand everything they are saying before they actually finish.
7. Be wary of the severity of your threats. Teenagers are fully capable of spiteful actions if they know you won’t expect them to follow through.
8. Act your age! Your child may not say they need it, but parents are essential for guidance and support, so be the kind of person you want them to be. Teenagers are smart enough to know what “hypocrite” means. Stories about your high school bell-bottom sizes are funny, but serving alcohol at your child’s party is not. You cannot possibly demand respect from your children or even your peers if you are enabling their bad habits, even if out of feigned ignorance.

9. Recognize your child's strengths and abilities, as well as their weaknesses and faults. If you are not accepting of what they are or are not capable of, you cannot possibly expect them to be comfortable with themselves either. Their best is all they can do, and it is different for every child.
10. Make yourself available and easy to talk to. Always be willing to talk, because open communication between parent and child is one of the best ways to prevent estrangement and shameful secrets.

*If you are unsure of when or where to talk to your child, we've suggested some simple ways! Parent-child relationships should be supportive and sometimes serious, but it is completely possible to have fun.*

1. Take them out to dinner.
2. Take a road-trip through the city, or make a trip to the local ice-cream parlor. If you haven't tried before, try listening to their radio station of choice... you never know!
3. Watch one of their favorite TV shows with them! You'll most likely have some outrageous drama to discuss afterwards...
4. Plan a family dinner and cook it with them, or get a new dessert recipe and bake it!
5. Go out before school and start their day with them at a local coffee house.