

10 Tips for Connecting with Your Teen

PARENT-CHILD CONNECTION IS PROTECTION

In today's high speed, sexually charged, just-do-it culture, who wouldn't want a "super-protector" for their teen? *Super-protector*. That's what experts in the field of adolescent health have labeled this thing we call "parent-child connectedness."

To date, this "connectedness" has been linked with powerful things like preventing early sexual activity and teen pregnancy, increasing self esteem, reducing violence and drug use, and improving social relationships.

Parent-child connection is not how much time you spend together, how often you volunteer at their school, or even how cool their friends think you are. It has more to do with the quality of the time you spend together, the mutual bond that your child senses, how well you listen and respond to their questions, and the guidance you provide. *Connectedness is not easy to define in a sentence, but it's not that hard to accomplish*, and adolescence is the perfect time to boost that connection for its protective benefits.

1 GET TO KNOW HER WORLD

and remember it changes often. Learn about her passions, know her friends, watch her movies, talk to her friends' parents, follow her social media use, listen to her music, watch her favorite shows.

2 SCHEDULE PROTECTED TIME FOR A SHARED ACTIVITY

Set aside time to do what he wants to do. And let yourself have fun!

3 HELP HIM THINK THROUGH DECISIONS, BUT DON'T MAKE THEM FOR HIM

4 UNDERSTAND THEIR TOUCH HUNGER

they still need hugs, but not in public. Let your teen know your love is always there and not dependent on what they do.

5 BE AVAILABLE & ASKABLE ON HER TIMEFRAME

not just when it's convenient for you. Stay up late. You'll hear what's really on her mind.

6 DON'T EMBARRASS THEM IN PUBLIC

no matter how funny YOU think it is. You'll lose respect that will be difficult to regain.

7 BE A PARENT MORE THAN A FRIEND

Your teen probably has plenty of friends, so what she really needs is a parent that encourages growth & independence, sets boundaries, & enforces consequences for unacceptable behavior.

8 LEARN THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

When your teen talks to you (and that can be rare), stop what you are doing and listen with your whole body.

9 ENCOURAGE SAFE RISK TAKING

whether it's in a sport, standing up for a cause, or performing for others, encourage your teen to take risks that matter to her or him. Allow the excitement, anxiety, failure or triumph- they all help your teen grow.

10 DON'T FREAK OUT

over anything she tells you-at least not in front of her. If you freak out, it sends the message that you are not capable of helping with the stresses in her life. That makes her less likely to come to you with problems in the future. If you must freak out, do it away from your teen.