

Checklist: Getting on with Your Teenager

Please rate how you are managing the ideas below. This may help to guide you over the next few weeks.

| | | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly agree |
|----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | I make sure to set aside a daily chatting time with my teenager. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2 | My teenager and I have a special interest or activity that we enjoy doing together. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3 | I make sure to seize every opportunity to connect with my teenager. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4 | I try to respond warmly when my teenager tries to initiate a conversation with me. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5 | I have time to talk with my teenager. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6 | I take an interest in my teen's interests, hobbies and friends. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7 | I praise and encourage my teenager when they do something well. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8 | I tell my teen regularly about the things I am proud of about them. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9 | I listen to my teenager when they are talking about subjects that interest them, such as their friends, school or their opinions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10 | I know when to give my teenager some space and not become too involved. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

What I do well:

What I would like to do better:

Communicating Rules Assertively

It is really important to communicate to our teenagers in a respectful fashion. Teenagers learn much more from how we talk to them, than what we are actually saying. Even when we are asserting rules it is really important to remain respectful and assertive, even if our teen is upset, angry or simply does not agree with the rules.

Communicating Respectfully and Assertively

- ➔ Take responsibility for your feelings by using an 'I' message, for example, *'I feel upset'* rather than *'you made me upset'*.
- ➔ Express your positive intentions and concerns, such as *'I want you to be safe'*.
- ➔ Focus on what you want to happen, for example, saying *'I want you to tell me when you're late'*.
- ➔ Make sure your tone of voice is polite, firm positive and friendly.

Ineffective and Effective Communication – Examples

Ineffective

'What the hell do you think you are playing at staying out so late? You've really upset me' (attacking and blaming 'you' message).

'Is there something wrong with you that you don't see this mess? You and your friends are so lazy and inconsiderate' (sarcastic, blaming).

'You're talking rubbish now. Of course it's always wrong for teenagers at school to get involved in a sexual relationship' (argumentative, attacking).

Effective

'I worry about you going out late at night, especially when it is dark. You see, I want you to be safe' (expresses feelings as a positive concern using an 'I' message).

'I like it when your friends visit, (states positive first) but I get frustrated when the place is a mess (acknowledges own feelings). I'd like it if they tidied up after themselves' (makes reasonable request).

'My own view is that teenagers at school are far too young to get involved in a sexual relationship'. (respectful offering of parents view/value)

Remember to Listen

When assertively communicating to teenagers it is also important to listen to them and to appreciate their point of view. While you may not give in, it helps to acknowledge your child's feelings -

'I understand that you want to go out, but I think it is too late on a school night'.