



**Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers**  
**Tip Sheet #10: Unrealistic Myths about Parents & Teens**

Parenting is hard enough without buying into the unrealistic myths and expectations that society creates. Often, as parents, it's easier to get caught up with things you think you know about parenting and teenagers versus what is actually happening. When we challenge some of these old ideas we create opportunity for healthier relationships. Below are some common myths and the "truths" associated with them:

**Myth #1: A successful teen is ahead of the curve.**

Parents all have the right intention; they want the best for their child. However, it can be easy to lose sight of just being there for your child without having an agenda. Try connecting and focusing on the talents and abilities they have in the present moment. Allow them to grow and create their own values so that they can take ownership of their decisions.

**Myth #2: Teens don't care what their parents think of them.**

Teens care about what their parents think of them, but it's not always the coolest thing to say. Try not to take your teen's nonchalant attitude personally. Every day teens are faced with the questions "Who are you?" "Who do you want to be?" Remember to give your teen praise when they do something well and to avoid criticism when speaking with them about something you don't like.

**Myth #3: Teens do not want to talk to their parents.**

The fact is teens do want to talk to their parents, but in their own way and when the timing is right. Teens shut down when parents get too emotional; try keeping your cool and ask questions when talking to them.

**Myth #4: Your teen would be fine if it weren't for their friends.**

Keep in mind that teens choose each other; no teen is all good or all bad. Your teen has reached an age where their friends are the most important thing to them and they want to know that you respect and value their relationships.

**Myth #5: Always put your teens' needs ahead of your own.**

Being devoted to your teen and being devoted to yourself shouldn't be mutually exclusive. While you're busy making sure your teen gets proper nutrition, enough sleep, social interaction, and mental and physical activity, remember that *you* need all those things as well.

**Myth #6: "Losing it" with your kids makes you a bad parent.**

Even the most peaceful easy-going parent loses patience and yells. You are human and it's important for your teen to know that everyone makes mistakes. Apologize and try to come up with some healthy coping skills.