



Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers
Tip Sheet #1: Learning How to Listen to Your Teen

As a parent with so much life experience, it can be hard to sit back and listen to your teen without pointing out the problem and attempting to give advice. Below are some helpful tips on how to listen carefully and make sure you understand what your teen is trying to say:

1. **Stop what you're doing and give them your full attention.** Multitasking may be the most effective way to make use of your time, but when it comes to talking to your teen schedule a special time to listen. This demonstrates to your teen that they have your undivided attention and may encourage them to disclose more and ask questions.
2. **Display attentive body language.** Demonstrate non-verbally that you are there to listen. Look them in the eyes, lean forward slightly, nod encouragingly. Your body language says the most, and so will theirs. Observing your teen can provide insight in to how they feel.
3. **Don't interrupt them.** It's hard not to jump in with opinions and questions when your teen is talking, however, letting them finish can help uncover underlying messages and problems. Decide to be interested in what they are saying not what advice you have to offer.
4. **Restate and summarize their words.** Restating helps ensure that you heard your teen correctly. If you didn't, it gives them the chance to re-explain. It also lets them know that you are following everything they are trying to say.
5. **Reflect their emotions and never ridicule.** React sensitively to what your teen shares with you. While something they say may seem trivial to you, in their world every event is big. If you don't agree with something tell them in an open and understanding manner so that it doesn't push them away.
6. **Prepare for moments of honesty and vulnerability.** While talking, your teen may break down and share everything going on with them personally. Give them all time and support they need to share. These moments may be rarer for some teens than others.
7. **Don't follow-up with a lecture.** It is difficult enough for teens to share their life with adults without being worried about being confronted immediately afterward.