

4 Top Tips for Communicating with Teens:

1. “Look at me, I’m talking to you!” How many times do we say this to our teens when trying to get them to pay attention to us? Direct eye contact is very difficult for Teens. It is too emotional and too intense for them, particularly in a tricky conversation. And they seem to place any conversation with adults in the “tricky’ category. Let them look away, do something with their hands or even walk around the room when you talk. Movement is particularly necessary for boys.
2. “Go to bed, it’s late, you must be tired!” Teens’ hormones and sleep patterns change as they get older. They no longer can get up nor fall asleep as early as they used to. If you want to have a shot at a productive conversation with your teen, try approaching them later in the evening (right about your bedtime). If you can stay up closer to their bedtime, turn out the lights for your chat – this can work wonders.
3. “I can’t hear you; please say that again”. Try some one on one time. Take your teen out for a coffee, pizza or even dinner. Go for a drive, away from the rest of the family and really make yourself available for listening. Even if there is not much more conversation than small talk, it is a start. You set a template for it to happen again, they will (secretly) appreciate your effort and eventually you should get some good results.
4. “You did *what??*” Don’t overreact when they do share something. Take a deep breath and say “Hmmm...really...what do you think about that?” Then think about how you are going to handle the situation. You can even go away and come back later if you don’t trust yourself to hold it together. Much better to say too little in these predicaments up front and then more when you have thought things through or gotten a second opinion.

Doone Estey
doone@parentingnetwork.ca
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