

# Get your teen to **TALKBACK**

“The best inheritance a parent can give his children  
is a few minutes of his time each day.”

– O.A. Battista

You’ve successfully survived your child’s 2:00 a.m. feedings, toddler tantrums and skinned knees – but **how does one prepare for teenagers?** Many parents of adolescents feel like they’ve gone from the smartest person around in their child’s eyes to an unsophisticated relic overnight. But even if your teen is pushing you away, it’s important to find the time to reinforce healthy habits and listen with an open mind. Despite busy schedules and chaotic lifestyles, **quality time** is the one priceless accommodation our kids deserve!

The teenage years are **full** of hard decisions for your child – for the first time they are choosing how to manage everything from nutrition and body image, to drugs, sex, safety, peer pressure and bullying. It is very tempting to want to share the lessons of *your* youth with your son or daughter, but storytelling and lectures rarely work. Teens are essentially performers and scientists, trying on different personalities and testing limits to determine **for themselves** what sort of behavior is rewarding and appropriate for adulthood.

## Below are some tips to help you better understand and communicate with your teen:

### Latest research

The adolescent brain is not fully-developed, especially in the frontal cortex where **long-term plans and consequences** are weighed before risks are taken.

A 2009 study found that mothers who *expected* rebelliousness saw greater rates of unsafe behavior from children. Doing so may even cause your teen to feel abnormal if they **don't** act carelessly.

The three most positive steps a parent can take are to lead healthy lives, enforce limits on TV time, and communicate regularly with kids one-on-one and as a family – **eating dinner together** is a great start!

According to a *Students Against Drunk Driving* survey, 88 percent of parents said that important issues like drugs, alcohol and sexual activity were discussed in “**normal conversation**,” which facilitates open lines of communication. Only 36 percent of teens thought that was when they took place.

### How to hear and be heard by a teen

**Communicate in writing!** Smart parents leave notes when they want tasks attended to instead of yelling themselves hoarse. Keep it lighthearted, Write, “Help! We dishes are trapped in here! Can you set us free?” to see that the dishwasher gets emptied. Don't forget to leave praise notes, too.

**Monitoring teens** doesn't mean you need to hire an undercover detective, but it is crucial to always ask, “Where will you be? Who will you be with? What will you be doing?”, and “When will you be back?”

When talking with your teen about their problems, **listen for what they may be feeling and give it a name.** “It's like nobody in the world really understands you” often gets right to the heart of the matter.

**Involve your soon-to-be adult in household decisions** – Ask for their opinion the next time you plan on making a major purchase or change.

**Loosen up once in a while** and let your teen call the shots. Permit yourself to be “made over” in clothes they choose or ask them to show you their latest obsession, whether it's a book, movie, song or YouTube video.

**Make a choice for better health.**  
**Visit [spiritofwomen.com](http://spiritofwomen.com).**

### Websites to check out

- **General advice for parents:** [familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com)
- **Understanding their strange behavior:** [drugfree.org/teenbrain](http://drugfree.org/teenbrain)
- **Teenage nutrition and fitness:** [sparkteens.com](http://sparkteens.com)
- **Fun activities in your area:** [meetup.com](http://meetup.com)
- **Goal-setting community:** [43things.com](http://43things.com)
- **Young adults changing the world:** [dosomething.org](http://dosomething.org)
- **Online chore rewards program:** [activeallowance.com](http://activeallowance.com)
- **Do you speak “teen?”:** [theantidrug.com/resources/teens-technology.aspx](http://theantidrug.com/resources/teens-technology.aspx)
- **For young people struggling with sadness:** [twloha.org](http://twloha.org)
- **Advice for female role models:** [savvyauntie.com](http://savvyauntie.com)

As you find more vehicles of communication, you will be solidifying the bond between you and your child. This is the month to try to *get a teen to talk back!*

#### Sources:

Office on Women's Health  
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American Academy of Pediatrics  
[Kidshealth.org](http://Kidshealth.org)  
[Jointogether.org](http://Jointogether.org)  
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