

## 1. Take a hint

Look for the signs that your teen wants to talk, hanging around, dropping hints about issues, or asking for help with things they can typically do themselves.

## 2. Listen more than you talk

Make the effort to actually **hear** what your teenager is saying. Use "I" statements to communicate your feelings, as well as, validating their own. Even a statement like "I see" or a head nod can make you the best sounding board.

## 3. Check yourself

Be mindful of your facial expression and tones. Teenagers are more likely to interpret facial expressions in a negatively. Shouting can trigger an already sensitive fight-or-flight response. Name calling or insults can leave a damaging impact on self-image, especially from those they find most important. Be clear, you support your teen, not their behavior or the situation they find themselves in.

## 4. Avoid quick fixes

Don't rush to fix the problem. This can make their problems feel trivial and you just want their problems to go away. Ask clarifying questions to process what they think solutions could be.

## 5. Don't take it personally

Parents can withdraw in response to one word answers from teens. Remind yourself that a growing independence of your teenager is a healthy and good thing. While they may not say it, they still love you and appreciate you.

**One thing I can do this week to communicate with my teen is:**

1.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Quick Ideas:

- Set aside time on a regular basis to do things they like to do. These times can create positive rhythms and safe spaces for tough conversations. They also provide an opportunity to make "emotional" deposits into their lives to remind them that you like them, not just love them.
- Help teens find words to express themselves by using feeling words to summarize what they're trying to say so that teens can pick up on this new vocabulary
- Find new opportunities to connect, like talking about music in the car, driving them places, or stopping for coffee before school.
- Make decisions together and brainstorm solutions to your teens future. As teens grow, they crave more opportunities to make decisions and have their voice heard.

