

How To Build a Stronger Connection With Your Teen

All parents want to have a good connection with their children. However, circumstances in life happen for both you and your children that prevent the kind of connection that you might hope for.

Like many parents, you may be stressed, overworked, and overtired, and you may not be aware of how much it is affecting you or your relationship with your teenager. Where you are at with yourself in terms of your own emotions, thoughts, and hopes is a crucial starting point in preparing to strengthen your connection with your teen, and it often gets neglected. As parents you may forget or discount yourself and focus all your energy on your son or daughter trying to get them to change. However, change can start with you and how you want to be as a parent. Once you're clear on how you want to be as the adult, you can make a conscious effort to strengthen your connection with your teenager.

Below are some ways to help you take time out from your hectic life to build a stronger relationship with your teen.

- **Take care of yourself first, and see where you are with your own energy.** If you find yourself exhausted you'll need to take care of yourself by getting the support you need to make the changes with yourself that you desire. Perhaps you need to do something relaxing or fun to rejuvenate and re-energize.
- **Find something to talk about that is either neutral--** or better yet --enjoyable to both you and your teen. School work and house chores are usually not very good opening topics. TV programs, clothing stores, music, sports in general, going fishing, musical instruments, movies, food, etc., are some ideas that might work. But you'll need to be creative and do some exploring to make it specific for your teen's interests.
- **Find something to do together for one-on-one time.** Playing golf, going to a movie, going out for dinner or lunch, going to a hockey game, camping, skiing, etc. Do whatever is enjoyable to you both.
- **If you're really struggling with your teen, try meeting your son or daughter for lunch during school time and arrange that they have an extended lunch hour because they are with you.** I'm not promoting skipping school, but occasionally an extended lunch hour spending time on parent-teen relationship building may be acceptable. Remember, however, that it should be one-on-one

time with your son or daughter, not a group lunch for a bunch of teens who want to get out of school.

- **Go for a drive in a car just the two of you.** Maybe even let your teen drive a bit if they have a learner's license.
- **Ask your teen to teach you a video or board game and play it with him or her.** I've worked with teens whose fondest and best memory is of being with their parents when they played silly board games together.
- **Be creative and keep trying.** You do have the resources within you to improve and strengthen the relationship with your teenage son or daughter. It may not happen over night, but over time things can change.
- **If, after trying the above, you may want to seek the help of a therapist for you and your teen.** A professional therapist can help guide you and your teen towards building a closer relationship with each other.

When you start with how you want to be as a person first, you will likely find the rest will fall into place to help you strengthen your relationship with your teenage son or daughter. Most techniques and ideas to build better relationships only work if you are coming from a positive and energetic place from within you. This may take some effort

and change on your part, but it will certainly get things moving between you and your teen.