



How To Talk To Your Teenager



"You can't protect them from all the dangers in today's world or spare them the emotional turmoil of their adolescent years... but if you create the kind of climate in your home where your kids feel free to express their feelings there's a good chance they'll be more open to hearing your feelings. More willing to consider your adult perspective. More able to accept restraints. More willing to be protected by your values."

This is a quote from one of two books successful in teaching teen-parenting skills today. One is *How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk* by Elaine Mazlish and Adele Faber (where the quote is from). The other is *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic* by Jim Fay and Foster Cline. What is key in both books is that the parents know how to really listen allow teens the chance to solve their own problems and keep anger out of the communication.

REALLY LISTEN AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS.

Faber and Mazlish believe parents of teens should dial back on the natural tendency to judge comfort and solve... and simply show they are listening by acknowledging their feelings. "Feelings are never right or wrong says Faber. Only actions need to be limited. Feelings should always be accepted. "By practicing this the authors say chances are that teens will find their own solution" — which is exactly what they need to learn as they become adults.

OFFER CHOICES IN A LOVING MANNER.

Fay and Cline also aspire to the same idea of preparing teens for responsible adulthood. They write that talking to teens with love and logic can do this. Love allows them to grow through their own mistakes even as you set boundaries. Logic shows them how to weigh the consequences and live with the outcomes of their choices. By doing this the teen retains ownership of his situation is empowered to decide and learns to accept he must be responsible.

In this "toddler" state of adulthood, where teens are still dealing with turbulent physical changes and building their identity, there are three key things they need to know when you are talking to them and offering choices for their actions:

1. That they are LOVED.
2. That they are CAPABLE and have the skills they need for their age.
3. That they can DECIDE for themselves but must live with the consequences of that decision.

KEEP THEIR OPINION AT BAY.

Mazlish maintains that to remain in touch and a part of a teen's life and to continue to pass on our values parents must express without damaging the teen's self-esteem. When teens are full of resentment they are unable to think about what they have done and why it matters.

On the parents' side, Fay and Cline insist that if you are angry you must delay, if possible. It is not easy to function in a "thinking state" when rage is keeping you in an emotional one. One parent came home to a pizza-stained carpet mess made by her 16-year-old daughter and her friends. She said, "I'd better calm down first. We'll talk later. Try not to worry." By the next day, her daughter already had a plan for selling some of her things to hire a carpet cleaner.

It takes patience and practice to create a positive environment where everyone feels free to express and share. Practice these skills by bonding over activities that call for equal communication and teamwork like cooking for example. Try something new and easy together, something that you will enjoy working on or eating like [Del Monte's Red Sinigang](#). Change the dynamics of the meal and your relationship with just a bit of [Del Monte Tomato Sauce!](#)

Sources:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2006/sep/23/familyandrelationships.society>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sd5J19X2U7w>

http://www.loveandlogic.com/pages/spring_fever.html