



Tips for Responding to Teenagers

- ☑ **Keep in mind that it's normal for your teens to want to be independent from you.** Try to look at their behaviors through that lens.
- ☑ **Admit to yourself when you have overreacted.** Go back to your teen. Admit that you overreacted. Apologize if that feels OK to you. Then sit down and begin a real conversation.
- ☑ **Forgive yourself if you've responded negatively to your child.** Many parents overreact out of fear or concern for their child's welfare. Remember it's always possible to recover from these incidents. Usually the first step is going to your child and apologizing. When the relationship has been repaired, you can move on with your teen to a more positive place.
- ☑ **Build a support network around you.** Parents who feel supported by friends, family members, clergy, or other trusted professionals, find it easier to deal with frustrating behavior from their teens.
- ☑ **Find out why your teen is behaving in a particular way.** Teens say they want parents to "walk a mile in their shoes" and to try to understand their point of view. Remember to *listen* as much as, or more than, you talk.
- ☑ **Pick your battles.** Give your teenagers privacy and allow them to make some of their own important decisions.
- ☑ **Help your teen gain the skills s/he needs to live independently.** That is one of your most challenging, but important jobs, as a parent.
- ☑ **Think about how your responses to your teen's behavior will affect the closeness you share.** Try to maintain a close connection with your teen. Remember that when teens feel connected to their parents, they are less likely to get involved in problem behaviors such as drug use or early sexual activity. (However, don't stop using a firm, fair and consistent set of household rules).

■ **Parent-Child Connectedness: New Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention**

ETR Associates with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Reprinted from ReCAPP — ETR Associates' Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy
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