

# 100 Ways to Connect with your Teens

by Dr. Debra Hapenny Ciavola

1. View adolescence as an adventure.
2. Respect their privacy.
3. Create family times around activities they enjoy.
4. Keep the delicate balance between holding on and letting go.
5. Understand the nature of the adolescent beast.
6. Take advantage of an unexpected connection.
7. Bite your tongue.
8. Don't take their chaotic behavior or mood swings personally.
9. Help them discover their spirituality.
10. Catch them doing something right and praise them.
11. Influence your teens' decision making, but don't say "I forbid."
12. Give privileges with age and responsibility.
13. Be their mentor and ally.
14. Guide them, not manage them.
15. Be clear about expectations and the consequences for not meeting those expectations.
16. Be your teen's advocate.
17. Show true interest in their activities.
18. Expect miracles.
19. Be their parent. Teens do want rules, limits, and questions from you.
20. If you can't police, monitor or enforce a rule, don't have it.
21. Watch the little rules that poison relationships.
22. Spend time alone with your teen.
23. Ask open ended question, such as "What are you learning in your history class?"
24. Encourage them to talk it out.
25. Actively supervise your teen's exposure to media violence.
26. Acknowledge your teen's fears, even if you do not agree with them.
27. Control your own behavior.
28. Talk about gangs and cliques.
29. Allow them safe and healthy outlets for their energy.
30. Use "I" statements rather than "You".
31. Enforce the important stuff, not the little stuff.
32. Seek to understand what your teen is really saying rather than reacting.
33. Share something personal that relates to your years as a teen.
34. Avoid giving unwanted advice.
35. Discuss personal matters on sex and fears.
36. Give your teen the impression that you trust them to do what is right.
37. Listen patiently to your teen's reasons for wanting to do something.
38. Connect with your teen. Reflect on your adolescence.
39. Avoid lecturing.
40. Be someone they can believe in.
41. Make your home a place where teens want to hang out.
42. Talk less about the media and more about real heroes in our country.
43. Make a list of ten things you like about your teen and tell them.
44. Teach them how to be compassionate, empathetic, and fair.
45. Show compassion to other teenagers.
46. Keep your face relaxed when they are telling you something you don't want to hear.
47. Talk about drinking and its consequences. Make your expectations known.
48. Help them establish their own autonomy while maintaining a loving relationship with you.
49. Support your teen's interests and encourage in their accomplishments.
50. Have regular family meetings in which the whole family talks things over and makes decisions together.
51. Ask what worries them most about their future.
52. Use natural and logical consequences, so discipline makes sense.
53. When they come home from an event ask, "How did you show good character?"
54. Teach respect for life in all forms.
55. Ask if they would like to go out to eat, run an errand, or go shopping with you.
56. Show up to watch them in their activities. Clap loudly.
57. Talk to their friends, learn their names, and let them confide in you.

58. Work together in community activities.
59. Learn more about their world.
60. Believe they can make a difference and be a success.
61. Admit when you are wrong. Be able to say, "I'm sorry."
62. Hug them often.
63. Say, "I love you. I'm proud of you."
64. Show your teen respect.
65. Eat dinner together four to five days a week.
66. Never berate or belittle teens in front of their friends or peers.
67. Ask their opinions.
68. Give them room to breathe to balance independence with dependence.
69. Set standards in clothing while still allowing them to express themselves.
70. Talk to your teen when there is not a problem.
71. Listen carefully to what is being said as well as what is not.
72. Have daily conversations.
73. Share your concerns rather than being the undercover cop.
74. Keep the discussions with your teen confidential unless they are involved with something dangerous.
75. Follow through on promises.
76. Allow your teen to take responsibility when you see them handling it well.
77. Forgive your teen when they make a mistake.
78. Negotiate new challenges.
79. Give your teen increasing autonomy (even if it kills you).
80. Accept all of your teen's feelings as long as they are respectfully conveyed.
81. Schedule times to talk about unappealing topics. Do not catch on the fly.
82. Focus on what your teen did right before offering constructive criticism.
83. Make more statements rather than asking questions.
84. Talk to your teenager rather than at them.
85. Don't over-react.
86. Accept they will have moody behavior and teach them how to deal with it.
87. Allow them to make decisions about their own lives whenever possible.
88. Remember you are in the process of "people-making."
89. Express words of appreciation.
90. Listen with your heart.
91. Help them develop a sense of humor by telling funny stories of your day.
92. Enforce mutually acceptable behavior standards.
93. Listen to the whole story before you react.
94. Use natural and logical consequences when a boundary is broken.
95. Cook together or teach them how to cook.
96. Wait up until they come home.
97. Talk in the dark after the house is quiet and they are tired and relaxed.
98. Find out if they want you to fix it or just listen before you give advice.
99. Discover a shared passion together.
100. Remember, children become who you predict them to be.

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