

Four Ways to Communicate Better with Your Teen

Understanding the needs of your child: The first step to being able to outwardly effect change is to be able to inwardly effect change, and this stems from understanding why your child is reacting differently to you or behaving in a way that you don't recognize. Although it may be difficult to feel as though your child is growing apart from you, it's important to be aware that this is a natural and inevitable stage in your child's development.

Respond with compassion and understanding: Being on the receiving end of criticism and accusations can leave one feeling angry, frustrated and unseen. All parents should approach interactions with their child with compassion and understanding. If your child is constantly met with intense, reactive responses, no matter how well intentioned, they may feel more inclined to fight back, or worse, they may not want to confide in you again.

Listen carefully for the underlying message: What a teen says is often not what a teen means. It can be easy to get hurt by the bite of a teen's angst and thus take their words at surface value. It may be helpful to remind yourself that it's not personal and that your teen is in the process of learning how to express his/her emotions. A statement such as, "I wish you weren't my mom!" may have many possible underlying meanings such as "I feel frustrated that we're not understanding each other right now," or "I'm so angry that you embarrassed me."

Find solutions together: Instead of the old "as long as you live under my roof, you will follow my rules" lecture, it may benefit your relationship to join forces and come up with solutions together. Of course, at the end of the day, you are the adult; however, if your child feels as though they are part of the process, it may increase receptivity and acceptance.

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