

Opening Dialogue With Your Teen

BEST USE

As a “cheat sheet” for a parent trying to open up meaningful communication with his or her teen.

PURPOSE

Helps parents push past the sometimes awkward process of talking to a teenager by sincerely listening to what matters to them.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Schedule a short road trip with your teen with a fun destination such as hiking, camping, shopping, meal out, or whatever he/she would enjoy. Bring the list of twenty questions on the reverse side. Use or edit whichever of these questions seem to fit your situation.

PLAY ACTION

While driving to your destination, ask several of the following questions. It is sometimes easier for a teen to open up while you both watch the road than it is face to face.

1. What is something you want me to know about you?
2. In what ways do you feel that I do not understand you?
3. How do you hope that our relationship can improve over this next year?
4. How can I do a better job listening to you?
5. What are several ways I can be a better parent to you?
6. What are some new things that our family can do together for fun?
7. In what way would you like for me to consider giving you more responsibility and freedom?
8. Who are your most important friends right now and why?
9. Who do you look up to right now?
10. What is your biggest worry?
11. What do you think that I think about you?
12. What one word best describes you?
13. If you could change something about your school, what would you change?
14. When do you feel most alive?
15. What would be the best day of your life? The worst day?
16. If you could have one super power, which super power would you have and why?
17. What is your strongest emotion?
18. What do you want to be remembered for?
19. What is your best childhood memory?
20. How can I do a better job serving you?

Keep in mind, the goal is to listen and learn – not to correct their impressions or “fix” anything too quickly. Also, remember that your teen may feel awkward talking to you about some of these concerns if you have not had similar chats before. Be patient, and don't worry if they struggle opening up. Simply move on to whatever fun experiences you've planned and try again later.