



How to Really **Connect** With Your **Teenager**

Being a parent of a teenager is a tough job! It's often a struggle knowing how to connect with your adolescent. Use these tips to create a more authentic, loving relationship with your teen.

- Engage in thoughtful ways.** The more you know about your teen, the more thoughtful questions you can ask and stay involved in their life. This will avoid more generic "How was your day?" questions that will almost always result in the answer, "Fine."
- Listen.** Your teenager really is able to think on her own, and she even has great ideas and thoughts to share. Not only that, listening to what your teen says shows you care about her life and what she has to say.
- Speak their language.** No, I'm not talking about being your teenager's friend or trying to be "cool." Everybody speaks a different language, including your teen. Knowing his language will ensure you can speak in ways he will clearly understand. Check out Gary Chapman's "The Five Love Languages of Teenagers" for more information.
- Find common interests.** Your teen craves connection, and if they don't feel like they have anything in common with you, they'll connect with friends instead. Find topics you both enjoy and work them into your conversation.
- Don't be judgmental.** This is hard to do when you listen to some of the things your teen says. But remember, she is learning how to be an adult, just as you did once, and the job of "adult" isn't easy! We all do and say questionable things along the way, and your teen is no different. Judging him makes him feel inferior, and no one likes that!
- Take long car drives.** Car conversations work brilliantly because you don't have to look at each other. Sure, eye contact is a great form of communication, but your teenager doesn't care to engage you that way when talking about sticky topics. Looking at trees is less intimidating!
- Compliment her character.** If you focus only on what your teen does, you'll be missing out on the core of who your teen is. What she does doesn't make her who she IS. When you notice how helpful your teen is, how nice they were to the grocery store clerk, or how her ability to make a sound decision, let her know!