



STRATEGY: SHARE THE LOAD

Teenagers who have a variety of adults watching out for them are less likely to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviours.

When work or other activities keep you away from home and you unable to supervise your kids, involving other adult whanau members, family friends, or neighbours can be helpful in bridging the gap.

It could be:

- neighbour
- friend
- friend's parents
- grand parent
- uncle or aunty
- older brother or sister

Make sure that whoever it is has your contact details (e.g. mobile phone number) just in case for emergencies.

MAKE YOUR HOME FUN FOR YOUR TEENAGER

Your home should be a welcoming place for teenagers if you want them to spend time there and for them to want their friends visit. Remember that your teen wants to be with their friends, and not always with you. Have an area available where they can be on their own and not always under your watchful eye. But make it a place where, while it is fun for them and their friends, you can also occasionally breeze in and out.



**KIDS THAT FEEL
CLOSE TO ONE OR
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COMMUNICATION



*** STRATEGY:**

**LISTEN TO YOUR TEENAGER ...
WHEN THEY ARE READY TO TALK**

Kids that feel close to one or more parent tend to do better in life.

It is natural for kids to communicate less with their parents during their teenage years. This is part of growing up. However, communication is one of your most important tools and you just need to look for those moments of contact when you are both there with each other.

Take the time to understand. It might not always be convenient – but moments of contact are much more important during the teenage years. Being approachable is the key even if it is 1 a.m. and you go to bed at 10 p.m.

Try to create situations which make talking easier (driving your teenager to school, having them help you with household tasks). You have to be physically close to your kids for communication to occur. Whenever possible, you should try to do things with them, rather than separately. Although teens may not always accept them, provide opportunities for them to do things with you – but don't be too disappointed if it doesn't always work out. Just keep at it!

*** STRATEGY:**

**ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS
AND LISTEN WITH THE INTENTION TO HEAR**

Good communication requires not only good listening – but also knowing the right way to ask questions. You will learn more – and show that you care more - if you ask questions that need more than “yes” or “no” answers.

Try to:

- **Stop what you are doing - turn off distractions like the TV or stereo**
- **Talk in private if possible if there are others around**
- **Look at your teenager**
- **Give your full attention**
- **Sit at the same level**
- **Listen to what is said without interrupting**

Comment on what you think you heard. “It sounds like . . .” or “So what you’re saying is . . .” are good ways to begin. If your teenager agrees that what you heard is what they said and they have asked for an answer, give one. If no question has been asked, tell them that you understand. If you did not understand what was said, ask your teen to clarify what they are trying to tell you and repeat the last two steps until you do.

The fact that you understand how your kids feel does not necessarily mean that you agree with their behaviour. Show that you accept your teenager as him- or her-self, regardless of what has or hasn't been done. It means that you care about their feelings!



STRATEGY:

SEND CLEAR AND ENCOURAGING MESSAGES

Don't criticise your teenager, even when he does something wrong. It's the behaviour that is wrong or bad, not your teenager. It is not what you say, but how you say it. Constant nagging of teenagers can be a sure way to put them off wanting to talk with you.

Be sure most of what you say is constructive and positive. Rather than reminding them of mistakes, failures, or something they forgot to do, stick with the positive stuff and talk about their successes, accomplishments, and interests. Praise and recognise appropriate behaviour in order to encourage more of that.

When you need to comment, focus on the behaviour or the actions, not your teenager personally.

✗ NOT **"You're such a lazy kid – you never do anything around the house"**

✓ TRY **"I'd really appreciate you giving me a hand with the cleaning today"**

"Why aren't you up? Are you going to sleep all day? Who said you could use that? Clean the dishes off the table. Hurry up and get dressed. Why did you put that on? Turn down the radio."

We may think that such messages teach our kids to be responsible. But when most of the messages they receive are like these, they may end up feeling dumb and unloved.



STRATEGY:

BE OPEN AND TELL THE TRUTH

Teenagers are more likely to respond better to positive comments. Sometimes a nod, a hug, or simply a step toward them is all that is needed to show you understand.

"Good morning. Thanks for hanging up your clothes. Thanks for washing your plate. I'm glad you got yourself up and dressed. Will you help me please?"

Teenagers want the truth so don't try to "protect" them. Tell them what you think - and why. Be honest. Your teens may not agree with you or like what you say but they should respect you. And if you are honest with them, hopefully they will be honest with you. Work to create a feeling of trust in your home. When your teenager hits a problem, you want them to be able to be open and trust that they can discuss something with you without feeling as though they are being 'judged'.

The more you talk and listen to your teenager the less likelihood there is of a falling out between the two of you.

