

The Do's and Don'ts of Talking to your Teen

By Anne Brunette, MSW

Don't	Do
Discuss problems on your time schedule only, without consideration of what they are doing	Schedule a time that works for both of you
Nag, preach or use cliches	Decide how you want to handle important discussions first. Listen to how your teen sees things, then share (in as few words as possible) how you see it. Treat your adolescent's thoughts with respect. Let them know that rewards and consequences are based on their behavior and will be given.
Lecture	Have a two-way conversation. Be firm about what kind of words are acceptable and cut the conversation off if disrespect is present. Problem solving cannot be done when parents or kids are angry.
Argue with your adolescent	When discussions get heated, say only what you need to say, such as, "We are not going to talk about this when things are so heated. Lets get back together in a half-hour." Come back ready to solve problems, not win the argument.
Keep your own life completely private	Talk about your day, your thoughts, feelings and ideas. Kids do want to know about your life as well.
Be the enforcer only, giving only negative feedback	Have fun together. Hang out with each other. Be around when kids are with friends. You can learn a lot from listening to how they talk to each other. Give positive feedback often.
Minimize their feelings or completely buy into their reality	Empathize with the dilemma's they face but also challenge them to regulate their emotions and make good decisions

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