

## Building Your Relationship with Your Teen

A good relationship is based on trust, security, and love. Nurturing these three values is essential to having a healthy relationship with your child. Even though your teen is becoming more involved in their relationships outside the family, it is still important for you to remain responsive to their needs and be there to guide and support them. You are your teen's first teacher, and the relationship you have with them is the basis of his emotional and social development.

Have family meals together. Your teen's schedule may be getting busier as they make their way through high school, but it's good to try to have family dinners together as much as possible. Research has found that when teens eat meals with family, they are more likely to get good grades and less likely to engage in risky behaviors like smoking, drinking, drug abuse, and sexual activity. Try to set a time that works for all family members, and use this as an opportunity to discuss everyone's day and open up discussions about important topics like friends, relationships, responsibility, and important ongoing activities. Having dinner together is a great way to get everyone to check-in, and it helps build a strong relationship between you and your teen. Education consultant Jennifer Miller suggests making dinner together and having every member of the family contribute by setting the table, providing meal ideas, contributing to a shopping list, cooking, or cleaning up.

Find creative compromises and de-escalate conflicts. Maurice Elias, director of the Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning Lab, suggests that you try to de-escalate conflicts as much as possible. Elias says that even though your teen may be difficult, you are still the adult and have a greater responsibility to preserve your positive relationship. Try to step away from conflict. If you feel frustrated with your teen, Elias suggests that you tell them, "I don't feel that this is going anywhere right now. I need to cool down and think and we can continue this in an hour." Not only do you decrease the risk of saying something you will regret later, but you also model a vital skill for your teen, which is to avoid making decisions in the heat of the moment. You should try to make sure that you return to that conversation eventually, as this will allow you to generate ideas together for a mutually agreeable solution.

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