
May 2011 *LifeSolutions* Corner

“I’m worried about how things are going with my 14-year old daughter. We just can’t communicate! Often we both get angry and frustrated and say things we don’t mean to hurt one another. I need to find a better way to talk to her. Can *LifeSolutions* help?”

Yes, we can. People contact us frequently regarding communication issues between parents and teenagers.

A first step may be to look at *how* you are communicating ... are you talking **to** her or **with** her?

Some parents who talk **to** their teen question, order, judge, threaten, or blame. In response, many teens shut down or “talk back.”

Other parents who talk **with** their teens *listen*. They show respect for their child as a human being, with thoughts, feelings, and desires that are worthy of being understood and accepted as the child’s point of view. They also share their own feelings and concerns in a way that is not defensive or offensive.

Good listening means focusing on what the other person is saying rather than thinking about what you want to say as soon as you get the chance. And tone of voice and other body language sometimes “say” more than words.

With that information in mind, here are some tips to communicate better with your teen:

- ◆ Make eye contact. Give your teen your undivided attention! If you’re busy and it’s not a good time to talk, tell your teen that you’re interested in listening and commit to another time as soon as possible.
- ◆ Avoid interrupting when your teen is talking. If you have a habit of jumping in with your comments, pretend your lips are glued together and cannot open until your teen is done talking.
- ◆ Listen for the underlying feelings beneath the words. Observe your teen’s body language and tone of voice. Listen with your eyes as well as your ears.
- ◆ Before you say anything, make sure you understand your teen’s message. Like a mirror, reflect back, in your own words, what you think your teen was saying (without adding your own judgment). It’s important that your teen feels heard and understood; then she or he will be more likely to listen (and hear) what you say.
- ◆ It’s important to keep your own emotions (anger, fear, hurt) under control while you listen.
- ◆ Finally, give your opinion without criticizing your teen’s opinion. Sometimes the best resolution is that you agree to disagree.

These things can be hard to do. That’s where *LifeSolutions* can help. We can coach you in new and better ways to communicate with your teen. We can work with you, or you can invite your teen to join in. Call us at 1.800.647.3327 to schedule an in-person appointment or a telephone session with one of our counselors.

To learn more, visit our website at www.lifesolutionsforyou.com. We have many articles on communicating with teens. Click on the *WorkLife* portal log-in and enter your company code (if you don’t know it, call 1.800.647.3327). Look for the category *Balancing* on the left-hand side. Then click on *Communication* and select the *Articles* link. Scroll down to the *With Your Teen* heading and click on any of the links.

Nothing in this information is a substitute for following your company policies related to information covered here.

