

Know Myself, Know My Teen

Sometimes your opinions and personal experiences can stand in the way of listening with an open mind. If teens feel judged by their parents or guardians, they are less likely to share information that may be sensitive, embarrassing, or hard to talk about. Ask yourself these questions before you talk about sensitive and tough issues with your teen.

- 1 How do you feel?** Think through your opinions on subjects you will talk about with your teen. What are the memories and personal experiences that may shape your opinions and reactions? Keep in mind that your experiences may be different from your teen's experiences.
- 2 What was I doing when I was 16?** Have you thought about what you want to share with your teenager? Keep in mind where your teen is in his or her development. Hold off on sharing sensitive information with your teen until he/she is in the middle teen years or mature enough to handle the information.
- 3 Are you listening to your teen?** Spend as much time listening as you do talking. The key to good communication is hearing and understanding what your teen is saying and not making quick judgements.
- 4 Do you judge too quickly?** Always ask your teen what she or he is doing rather than assuming the worst. Pay attention to the way your teen makes decisions. Trust that he or she can make good decisions with accurate information. Remember to give information in a way that is easy to understand.
- 5 What are your rules about safety?** Tell your teen which rules are flexible and which rules must be followed for his or her safety. Repeat your message about the importance of safety. Seek help immediately if your teen is in an unsafe situation or is at risk of hurting him/herself or others.
- 6 Are you willing to get help for any problems you may have?**
It is important to be a role model for your teen. For example, if you are worried about your teen's substance use, it sends the wrong message if you or other household members are using drugs or alcohol. Seeing family members or other adults get or ask for help will encourage your teen to seek help for her or his own problems.



RESOURCES

- ♦ **Positive Parenting. KidsHealth for Parents:** www.kidshealth.org/parent/positive. Articles in English and Spanish.
- ♦ **Parenting. About Our Kids:** www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles_parenting.html. Articles in English and some in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Source:

1) Huberman B, Alford S. Are You an Askable Parent? Advocates for Youth. 2005, <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/frtp/askable.pdf>