



# Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

February 2021



## Talking With Teens

Enduring lockdowns and social distancing has been particularly difficult for teenagers during the COVID pandemic. Socializing, participating in sports and “hanging out with friends” are ways that teens develop self-confidence and discover who they are. They aren’t programmed to spend lots of time alone or isolated from friends. Teen depression and suicide are at record heights. It’s important for parents to communicate often with their teens and encourage them to share their feelings during this difficult time. Together, parents and their teens can find healthy ways for them to deal with the challenges they are facing.

Being a teen is often painful. Our teens must feel they can confide in their parents without being judged or condemned. They are still exploring the world around them and deciding where they fit in. It can be a difficult road. What they believe is right for them one day can change the next day. It can take a great deal of patience to follow this path with your teen without being judgmental. Teens, many times, don’t expect to be able to communicate with their parents. They are busy experimenting with who they are in ways parents may not approve of, from clothing choices to hair color, piercings and tattoos. Arguments about these choices can keep you from communicating with your teen on deeper issues. Experimentation is their way of exploring their world and many of these fads will pass with time. With so much exposure to social media, they can become confused and depressed if they don’t feel they fit in the way they think they should. It’s important for parents to ensure them they are loved for who they are, unconditionally.

How do parents encourage their teens to open up to them about their feelings? When it comes to communicating basic information like driving directions or a shopping list, your words carry most of the message. However, with an emotionally charged message like a problem, research has shown that more of the message is carried by body language, followed by tone of voice and lastly, the words themselves. In other words, how you say something is often more important than what you say. When all three channels of communication carry the same message, the communication is very clear and powerful.

A teen in pain needs to know that someone else feels their pain with them. The mistake parents often make is attempting to solve the problem for the teen instead of supporting them in solving it for themselves. By trying to solve your teen’s problems, you may actually diminish their courage, self-esteem and chance to learn how to solve problems on their own. Your goal should not be to provide a solution or to take away your teen’s pain; the goal should be to offer a caring ear, support and encouragement and to help them develop a useful solution. One technique Active Parenting suggests is the “palms up” approach. As you sit and talk with your teen, place your palms in an upright, open position. This signifies to the teen that you are willing to be open and listen without judgment.

It’s also important for parents to avoid common communication blocks, such as; commanding, placating, giving advice, distracting, psychologizing and judging. To learn more about these communication blocks and how to avoid using them, take advantage of the free parenting programs the ACFC has made available to you. You can join in an interactive, self-paced online class specific to parents of teens. There is also a library of videos available for parents of children of all ages. Click on the Active Parenting tab on the [ACFC website](#) to explore all of the parenting resources available to you.

### FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you’ll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. With this self-study course, you have the option of when to participate based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Choose from four available courses:

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For parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED:**  
For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:**  
For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:**  
For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an “active” parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

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