Building Strong Connections with Your Teen

Tip 1: Build mutual respect
- Teens are more open when they have some control and feel understood. Ask permission: “When is a good time to talk, now or after dinner?”
- Show empathy: “It’s hard to stay home and study when your friends are hanging out and I know you are committed to getting good grades.”

Tip 2: Ask open-ended questions
- Open-ended questions allow teens to think through risky behaviors and possible alternatives to those behaviors. They are not easily answered with a yes or no response. If you’d like to have a conversation with your teen about drinking alcohol, you could start by asking, “How will you handle being offered alcohol at the party?” instead of “Are you planning on drinking at the party?”

Tip 3: Foster self-worth and self-esteem
- Teens whose strengths are recognized will be motivated to develop those strengths. “You are a caring friend and want to work things out with Lisa.” Teens who are always told something is wrong with them are more likely to use substances, report depression and anxiety, and have sex at an early age.
- Empower them to take care of and value themselves: “You believe in respecting yourself and others.”

Teens who feel connected to their family
- have less drug use
- delay sex
- have less depressive feelings leading to suicide

Tips in Practice
Can we talk for a few minutes? Wait for your teen to respond. It can be really hard not to look at and respond to texts while driving. You care about being safe and keeping your friends safe when they are riding with you. Wait for your teen to respond. What can you do to keep from texting and driving? Listen and then offer some solutions of your own. Those are good ideas. What do you think about putting your phone in the glove box or putting it on ‘Do Not Disturb’ when you get in the car? End with, What can you commit to doing?

Success with Teen Speak
- 78% reported confidence (8+ rating*) in talking through challenging situations with their teen after Teen Speak vs 33% before
- 77% reported comfort (8+ rating*) when talking with their teen about risky behaviors after Teen Speak vs 38% before
- 53% reported feeling connected with their teen (often/almost always) after Teen Speak vs 35% before

The Teen Speak Series of resources—protect, connect and build trust with your teen.
- Teen Speak: How-to Guide – A detailed road map for connecting with teens, including information on adolescent development.
- Companion Workbook – A tool for practicing communication strategies presented in Teen Speak, including real-world scenarios.
- Online Learning Course – an interactive online Teen Speak course. Includes “hot topic” parent-teen scenarios, like technology boundaries, clothing battles, and peer pressure.

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