

KNOW MYSELF, KNOW MY TEEN

Sometimes your opinions can stand in the way of listening to your teen 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 issues with your teen.

How do I feel?

What is your mood? What are the memories that may shape your opinions? Keep in mind that what you went through as a teen may be different from what your teen is going through now.

What was I doing when I was 16?

Have you thought about what you want to share with your teen? Hold off on sharing sensitive information with your teen until he/she is in the middle teen years.

Are we finding some time together to enjoy each other?

It may be hard to believe, but most teens say they wish they had more time with their parents. Difficult topics may be easier to talk about when you spend enjoyable times together like going for walks, watching movies, doing projects, or sharing meals.

Am I listening to my teen?

Spend as much time listening as you do talking. Avoid making quick judgments. If you do not understand what your teen is trying to say, repeat what they have said back to them.

Do I judge too quickly?

Always ask your teen what she or he is doing rather than thinking the worst. Trust that he or she can make good decisions.

What are my rules about safety?

Tell your teen which rules must be followed for his or her safety. Follow through with consequences if your teen behaves in unsafe ways. Talk about the importance of safety on a regular basis, not only once. Get help immediately if your teen is in an unsafe situation.

Am I willing to get help for any problems I may have?

It is important to be an example for your teen. Seeing family members get help will encourage your teen to get help for his or her own problems.



Adapted with permission from "Are you An Askable Parent?" Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC. www.advocatesforyouth.org