

Talking to Your Teenager

If you build a strong and open relationship with your teenager, it will be easier to engage in conversation with them. You will, however, still need to let them know your feelings regarding drinking and driving, drugs, and sex. Even though these topics are not easy to talk about, they still need to be addressed.

Here are some ideas to help you tackle these difficult subjects:

- Do not go in with a well-prepared sermon. Teens do not want to be preached to. They will instantly tune you out.
- Do not fire questions at your teenager. Instead, start with a conversation opener such as, "You seemed to have a great time when you went out Friday night."
- If you are concerned for your teen's well-being, tell them. Be honest. They will listen to you with open ears if you speak from your heart and explain your concern.
- Let them know you believe in them and their ability to make the right decision when confronted with a risky choice.
- Talk with your teen about what they will do or how they will act in a given situation. For example, what will they do if an intoxicated friend insists on driving home?
- Tell your teen that it is OK to say *no*, and that they can always use you as a reason for not joining in on risky behaviors.
- Encourage your teens to be involved in school or other extracurricular activities to keep them active.
- Teach your teen your values by practicing what you preach and being a role model to them.
- Give your teen privacy in their room and respect them, as you have taught them to respect you.

There is no easy way to talk to your teen about hard subjects, but most teens will meet you halfway if they see you are making an effort.

Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2015). *Talking to your teenager*. Raleigh, NC: Author.