



7 Simple Ways to Show your Teen Love

The thing that your teen needs most from you as a parent is your love. When your child starts to push you away during the teenage years, they need your love more than ever. As a parent, you know your teen's best qualities better than anyone, even at times when these qualities become hidden by destructive behaviors. This tip sheet provides you with some simple ways you can show your teenager that you love them through the good and the bad times.

The foundation of a solid relationship with your teen is unconditional love. Unconditional love provides the cornerstone for a child's self-esteem. It's the love that communicates to a child, "I believe in you, I'm here for you, and I love you no matter what."

As your child enters the teenage years it is natural for tension to exist in your relationship. The word that describes teenagers best is change. During these transitional years, young people change constantly – their minds, their bodies and their hormones all change. Teenagers naturally start to question life, their future, their beliefs AND their parents. As your teen changes it is even more important for them to know that you love them, even when you are frustrated with them, and even when you don't approve of their actions or behaviors. Consistently communicating unconditional love, especially with difficult children and teenagers, is made easier by remembering the following tips.

SHOW YOUR TEEN YOU LOVE THEM BY:

- **Separate Actions from Behaviors**

When your teen does something that makes you frustrated, angry or disappointed it can be difficult to remain calm. Sometimes it is easy to shut down because of the pain your child's behavior may cause you. Take the time you need to calm down – and make the choice to recommit to showing unconditional love by letting your teen know "I don't like and don't approve of your behavior, but I love you anyway."

- **Give your teen your attention**

Your time and attention is your most valuable resource! Everyone is fighting for it – your boss, your friends and even the television. However, more than anyone else, your children need your attention the most. Do all you can to give your teen the positive attention they need and crave. Go fishing together, help them with their science project, go on monthly family "adventures" to different forts, or parks, or beaches, and create family traditions to share time together. Your time and undivided attention is the most valuable and loving gift you can give to your child.

- **Listen to your teen**

When you listen to your teen you are showing your child that they are important to you. Listening is a powerful way to build your teen's confidence by letting them know that you care. Take time everyday to stop and truly listen to your teen with your eyes, your ears and your heart.

- **Share with your teen**

Talk WITH your teen, share with them about your day, about things you did when you were young. Your stories let your teen know that you want to share your life with them. Your stories also help your teen to feel a sense of connection and belonging to a larger family and system of values. Too often our daily communication is about task; "Have you finished your homework?" or "Did you take out the trash?" When you take the time to stop and share with your teen, you are giving them a tremendous gift.

- **Be your teen's role model**

Children learn by following the lead of others. They follow the lead of friends, TV characters, and teachers, but YOU are the most important role model in your teen's life. Do all you can to make sure your actions are the ones you want your teen to follow. Teach your values by committing to them and demonstrating them to your teen. Admit when you are wrong and take responsibility for mistakes. Your primary influence on your teen are your actions not your words.

- **Encourage your teen**

When you encourage your teen you build confidence and self-esteem. Remind your teen of their strengths and talents. When they do something well, let them know that you notice! Tell them what a great job they have done and why. Listen to your teen's hope and dreams and support them to reach their goals. Giving your encouragement will help them have the confidence to accomplish great things.

- **Appreciate the uniqueness of your teen**

While your teen learns from you, and may be similar to you in many ways, it is important to remember that they are not you. They are likely to have different interests, talents, and personality. Take time to appreciate those things that make your teen different and special. Help them to explore their interests and provide them with the supports they need to appreciate their uniqueness and reach their full potential.

More information:

If you would like more information on this topic you can contact Family Centre and ask to speak with the Community Support Worker at 232 -1116

http://parentingteens.about.com/od/parentingcontracts/Parenting_Contracts.htm