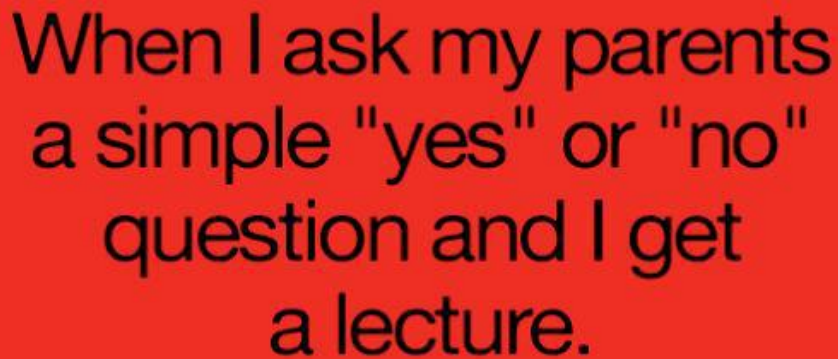


## Communicating with Teens: Breaking the Monosyllabic Barrier

When your child moves into adolescence, your relationship moves from one that entails an authoritative, hierarchical interaction to one of a discussion-based mutual decision-making interaction. Teens need you now, more than ever, to be available to them, even though conflict has increased and the role of friends seems to have overtaken your role, parents are still their primary source of information about their future. Teens still need to feel loved, even though a distance is created.



When I ask my parents  
a simple "yes" or "no"  
question and I get  
a lecture.

### Important Tips:

#### 1. Keep Communication Lines Open by Being Available to Your Teens

- \* Notice when they are talkative – and be there.
- \* Start the conversation – let them know that you care. Start by offering information instead of asking a question.
- \* Find time weekly for individual activities with each child and do not miss them.
- \* Learn about your child's interests.
- \* Engage your teens in meaningful conversations about current issues and events.

#### 2. Let Them Know that You are Listening.

- \* Stop what you're doing when they tell you something and listen.
- \* Express interest in what they say without being intrusive.
- \* Listen to their point of view, even if it is difficult.
- \* Let them complete their point before you respond.
- \* Repeat what they've said to ensure that you understand them.

#### 3. Respond in a Way that Your Children Will Hear.

- \* Soften strong reactions – otherwise they just tune you out.
- \* Express your opinion without rejecting theirs.
- \* Resist arguing about who is right.
- \* Focus on your child's feelings rather than your own.

### Things to Consider:

- \* Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, listening, help in addressing their feelings, or help with solving a problem.
- \* Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems, and work through difficult feelings. Therefore, set the right example.
- \* Talk to your children--don't lecture, criticize, threaten, or say insensitive things.
- \* Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, don't feel you have to control their decisions.
- \* Children often test our interest and reaction by telling us a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk, and they may share the rest of the story.
- \* Family rituals and holidays help us stay connected and aid open communication and the building of trust.

***MOST IMPORTANTLY: LAUGH TOGETHER. OFTEN. BUT DO NOT LAUGH AT THEM.***



### Remember:

#### Parenting is hard work

- Listening and talking is the key to a wholesome bond between you and your children. But parenting is hard work and preserving a good connection with teens can be difficult, especially since parents are dealing with many other pressures. If you are having problems over an extended period of time, you might want to consider consulting with a mental health professional. Consult our list of preferred health care professionals for further assistance.

Parents call it  
“**TALKING BACK**”

we call it:  
“**EXPLAINING**”