

Suggestions for Changing Family Relationship With Your Teenager

1. **Stop criticizing.** Not an easy step to take. However, it is an effective beginning toward changing the lines of communication from negative to positive.
2. **Restructure relations.** Tell your teenager at a quiet time that you have been thinking things over and wish to make some changes in your own attitude.
3. **Establish a relationship of equity with your teenager.** This, of course, does not mean that you, the parents, should give the child things which are excessively costly or service which puts you in the position of servant.
4. **Set some logical limits.** For example discuss where you think he or she should go socially, the appropriate hour for getting home, and the number of times per week for going out. If all are quietly talking and trying to solve the problem, letting go of the power struggle between each side, it is possible to reach some agreement.
5. **Once an agreement is reached the teenager should then take the responsibility to carry through.** It should not be the parent who has to ask, “Where are you going?” or the child who asks, “May I go to Ann’s house?” The teenager should simply state, “I am going to Ann’s house and will return at 10:30.” In turn, the adults should tell their teens where they are going and when they expect to return home.
6. **When you talk, state your feelings, but do not imply that only you are right.**
7. **Listen to what your teenager has to say.** Do not interrupt. Take the time to think about what has been said and ask the same courtesy for yourself, but stress that what you say is only your opinion.

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8. **Do not expect more from your teenager than you do from yourself.**
9. **You may have to change the lessons you are teaching by example.** For example, if you want a teenager to stop smoking and you, yourself, smoke; see if you can both agree to stop. And even if no agreement is reached, you stop anyway!
10. **Become willing to be taught by your teenager.** Show interest in what he or she tells you. This will encourage friendship.
11. **Enjoy the companionship of your teenager.** Parents may invite the teenager to join them in some activity, which they enjoy. Do not be hurt if you are refused; remember this is the age for breaking away from parents.
12. **Try to learn the teenage language** and do not get angry at its use. This does not mean that you have to use it.
13. **Live and let live.** Trying to fashion your teenager in your own image will not work.
14. **You may need counseling.** A psychologist or family counselor may save much time and effort and help you change yourself or your behavior.
15. **Let go, and let your teenager grow up.**
16. **Show your affection for your teenager** with an occasional hug, an arm around the shoulder, a pat on the back, and expressions of appreciation.
17. **You cannot give permission for a teenager to do anything illegal or allow the teenager to break the law while living with you.**

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18. **You do not have to spend money on teenagers for any object or activity of which you disapprove.**
19. **You should be willing to listen carefully to proposed ventures** and to discuss these sympathetically, giving your opinions. You may withhold your blessing, but you should not threaten or give an outright refusal.
20. **In crisis situations**, such as accidents while driving or arrests, **the less said in heat, the better.** Wait until everything has calmed down.