

## **Monday's With Kelly The Relationship Solution**

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Every Monday morning I break the rules, and allow my 13-year-old daughter to miss her first period class, and have breakfast with me, her mom.

Kelly and I value education. In fact, Kelly made straight A's on her last report card. However, I also value my relationship with my daughter. My time is limited. I am a single parent and work full time. Consequently, it is difficult to find one-on-one time. We are competing with school, extracurricular activities, church, social life, shared parenting, and everyday tasks. I wanted to better maximize the time we had together, and that time just happens to be Monday mornings.

A study published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, concluded that feeling loved, understood, and paid attention to by parents help teenagers avoid high-risk activities regardless of whether a child comes from a one or two-parent household. It is also more important than the amount of time parents spend at home. While, the amount of time spent with parents had a positive effect on reducing emotional distress, feeling connected to parents was five times more powerful. This emotional bond was about six times more important than was the amount of activities that teenagers did with their parents. I guess you could say our morning ritual is a form of vaccinations against the challenges of life that Kelly faces, every day.

There are two sides of life from which we can choose: a useful side where happiness is sought through relationships with others and a useless side where pleasure is sought without relationships. The useless side may include drugs, sex without love, and/or power. Experts' advice the single deciding factor that will safeguard young people from choosing to live on the useless side of life is a satisfying relationship with an encouraging adult.

Thus, this breakfast is no ordinary breakfast. It is purposeful and consists of the seven connecting habits: caring, trusting, listening, supporting, negotiating, befriending and encouraging. Parents who practice these caring habits seldom have teenagers who lie to them

because there is no need for lying. It is amazing how a breakfast can be totally connecting, and I'll spell out the seven connecting habits below.

1. Caring: My daughter knows I am putting her above all other things in life at that moment.
2. Trusting: I am trusting Kelly that she will complete her missed work.
3. Listening: I make a point of taking an interest in her, as a person. This gives her a sense of belonging and connectedness to me. I do not judge, or give advice.
4. Supporting: When she tells me what she is going through I don't try to fix her problems. Sometimes she wants my opinion, but usually I just listen. There are times she wants to know what I think and I provide guidance, while conveying faith in her abilities.
5. Negotiating with respect: We always talk about upcoming events, schedules, etc, and coordinate our time.
6. Befriending: I want Kelly to know that I am in her corner. This can be counter cultural, but it is preferable to be friends with your sons and daughters. Teenagers will more likely stay away from the useless side when they know that someone at home values and respects them.
7. Encouraging: Perhaps this is the greatest connecting habit! I convey to my daughter that she is a worth whiled human being. She has intrinsic value even when things go poorly.

If you are having a challenging time with a teen, instead of nagging or grounding, you may choose to invest time in building a quality relationship. If you need assistance, then a qualified counselor may help. To give time and yourself, the emotional bond, provides security for your developing teen.

