

Believe it or not . . . YOU are the most powerful prevention against risk behaviors!

Setting the Environment for a Real “Conversation” with Your Teen

Before the conversation even happens there are things we can do to make sure we’re sending a clear message that we want to work at having good communication with our teens. There are ways to build opportunities to communicate into your every-day family life. You could:

- Remember that it’s hard for teens (who are trying to become their own separate adults) to admit they still need and want to talk to their parents. It’s apt to make them feel childish.
- Be available and take every opportunity to talk with your teen, even when it’s inconvenient.
- Set a great example for listening – **turn off your phone!**
- Make sure you eat together at least a couple of times a week. Turn off the TV, I-pods, computers and phones while you’re eating.
- Use the time you spend in the car picking up or dropping off your teen. Often the fact that you can **NOT** make eye contact feels more comfortable to teens.
- Watch shows and listen to the music your teen enjoys. Use the stories and lyrics to start conversations.
- Get to know your teen’s friends and talk with them. They’ll be thrilled to have another positive adult in their lives!
- Instead of sending your teen to do chores, do them with her and use that time to talk, or find a project to do together. Again, “side by side” is often easier than “face to face”.