



Getting more involved with your preteen or teen today will help you stay connected tomorrow. This can help your child make better decisions about risky behaviors like smoking. It can be challenging to find time and begin these conversations. Below are ten tactics that other parents have used to stay involved in their child's life.



Get Into Your Kid's Head Here's How



- ① **Catch your child doing something right.** We often focus on the bad things our kids do. Compliment your child when he or she does something right. This can be as easy as "Hey, thanks for rinsing off your dishes."
- ② **Prove you listen, ask questions.** How many times have you nodded our head and said, "yeah" when you really didn't listen to your child. If you rarely listen when your child wants to talk—he or she will be less likely to open up to you next time. Find time to listen. Ask questions, so they know you are engaged in the conversation.
- ③ **Schedule time for you and your child.** We are all busy, and sometimes if it isn't in our planner it doesn't get done. Schedule 10 minutes for your child in your day planner and stick to it. Show your child he or she is important. Children who share activities with their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.
- ④ **Post a family calendar.** Staying connected is about keeping the lines of communication open. A good way to know where everyone is going and when you can schedule time together is to post a family calendar. As your child becomes more independent, this will help you monitor his or her activities. It also shows that their time is important, too, and that you care.
- ⑤ **Create rules, then enforce them.** Children need boundaries. Say "yes" when you can, but make "no" stick. Only the rules that are enforced matter.
- ⑥ **Regularly share a meal with your preteen.** It is not always easy, but when you can, sharing a meal together is a great time to get connected - as long as the TV isn't on. Teens who report eating meals with their family are less likely to smoke or use drugs. And please remember, these meals don't have to be elaborate or even home cooked.
- ⑦ **Share your day.** Believe it or not, your child wants to know about you. Sharing a brief story about your day first might change your child's answer to "How was your day?" from "fine" to something a bit more descriptive.
- ⑧ **Write your child a thank-you note.** Everyone loves to know they are appreciated—especially children. Slipping a thank-you note in her lunch bag or on her pillow or stuck on the bathroom mirror is sure to get a smile from your child. They want to know they are an essential part of the family too.
- ⑨ **Ask him or her for advice.** Your child may not be able to give you advice on how to refinance your home, but they may be just the right person to tell you how you should cut your hair, what to wear to a school event, or how to do something on your computer.
- ⑩ **Give your preteen family responsibilities.** By giving your child chores that are important to the whole family, such as taking care of the family pet, you let them know they are trusted with responsibilities.

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