



# Strengthening Parent/Caregiver-Teen Relationships

## Discussion Guide for Teens and Their Parents/Caregivers

February 2024

**Teens:** Do you ever struggle to communicate with your parent, caregiver, or another trusted adult? Do you wish they understood you better or that they would give you more independence to make your own decisions? If so, take the [Parent/Caregiver Relationship Quiz](#) on the [We Think Twice™](#) website. After you take this short quiz and read the tips from *We Think Twice™*, use this discussion guide to help your parent or caregiver understand the strengths and challenges in your relationship from your perspective.

**Parents/Caregivers:** This discussion guide gives you an opportunity to learn more about the strengths and challenges in your relationship with the teen in your life! After they have taken the quiz, follow these instructions for each section of the guide:

1. Read the brief background section about the topic together.
2. Use the discussion questions to have a conversation about the topic with the teen in your life.
3. Decide on any commitments either or both of you will make to strengthen particular aspects of the parent/caregiver-teen relationship and list those commitments or action items in the blank boxes.



# MUTUAL TRUST



## Background

Mutual trust is built over time. Both parents/caregivers and teens need to know they can rely on the other to be honest and dependable. You both need to be able to communicate with each other without fear of being judged, even if you disagree.

## Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)

- Can you think of any times when trust between us was lacking?
  - What happened to cause one or both of us to lose trust?
- What are some things I can do to create more trust between us?
- How easy is it for you to tell me about a mistake you made?
  - How can I make it easier for you?

## Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)

- What are some things I can do to create more trust between us?
- What is a new responsibility I could take on to show accountability and gain more trust?

## Action Plan: Mutual Trust

Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment

Teen's Commitment

# COMMUNICATION

## Background

Communication is a skill. Having good communication requires being intentional about what you say and how you say it. It also involves being a good listener.

## Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)

- What are some things I do that make you more open to talking with me?
- What are some things I do that get in the way of our having a productive conversation?
- What are some good times or places when we will both be calm and have energy to talk?

## Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)

- What are some things I do that make you more open to talking with me?
- What are some things I do that get in the way of our having a productive conversation?

## Action Plan: Communication

Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment

Teen's Commitment

# LIMITS AND EXPECTATIONS



## Background

When parents and caregivers are clear about their rules and teens know what is expected of them, it is easier for them to follow those rules.

## Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)

- How do you feel about the rules and expectations I have for you now?
  - Are the rules and consequences for breaking the rules fair? If not, what do you think should be changed?
- How much pressure have you been feeling lately about things like academics, sports, or other types of achievements?
  - What, if anything, do I do to cause you to feel pressure?
  - What can I do to help reduce the pressure?

## Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)

- What are the reasons behind the rules and limits you set for me?
  - What role does safety play in your rules and what other factors are involved?

## Action Plan: Limits and Expectations

Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment

Teen's Commitment

# INDEPENDENCE

## Background

Seeking independence is a normal part of growing up and is necessary for teens to become competent young adults. It's important for parents and caregivers to strike a balance between encouraging their teens' independence and guiding them to ensure their health and safety.

## Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)

- I want to make sure you are following your own dreams. What are some of your goals I may not know about?
  - What are some things I can do to help you achieve your goals?

## Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)

- What are some smart decisions I've made in the past that show you I'm ready to make my own decisions?
- What are some things I can do to show you that I'm ready for more independence and responsibility?

## Action Plan: Independence

Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment

Teen's Commitment

# WARMTH AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



## Background

Teens often feel significant stress and pressure related to school, jobs, extracurricular activities, and peer relationships. The COVID-19 pandemic has made these pressures worse. Parents and caregivers can make a huge difference by letting teens know they have unconditional love and support.

## Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)

- What are some things I say or do to let you know I value you for who you are?
  - What else can I do to make sure you feel accepted for who you are?
- What are some things I've done to make you feel appreciated when you do something special for me or someone else?
- What is the best way I can give you emotional support?
  - Do you prefer a listening ear or do you like getting advice?
- What is one thing you wish I knew about your life that would help me understand the challenges you face?

## Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)

- What are some strategies you use to deal with stress in your life?

## Action Plan: Warmth and Emotional Support

Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment

Teen's Commitment

# INVOLVEMENT

Background
Even though teens tend to seek more independence as they mature, they still benefit from having a close relationship with their parents and caregivers. Talk about ways you can make sure you stay involved in each other's lives.
Discussion Questions (for parents/caregivers to ask teens)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are some one-on-one activities we both enjoy that we could do together?</li><li>• What is one thing you are passionate about or love to do that you could teach me about?</li><li>• What are some ways I can get more involved in your school or extracurricular life?</li></ul>
Discussion Questions (for teens to ask parents/caregivers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is one thing you are passionate about or love to do that you could teach me about?</li></ul>
Action Plan: Involvement
Parent's/Caregiver's Commitment
Teen's Commitment

This guide was created by the *We Think Twice*™ campaign with support from the Family and Youth Services Bureau. It is one of several valuable resources designed for youth-serving professionals as well as parents/caregivers. It is intended to encourage positive youth development by strengthening prevention education and other youth development programs.



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