



## Effective Communication with Your Adolescent Child

Are you the parent of an adolescent who answers your questions with a shrug and tries to spend every free hour behind closed doors texting with friends? Are you sad or angry about the loss of the closeness you once felt with your son or daughter? You're not alone! Keeping the lines of communication open with your teen can help him or her make a smooth and successful transition to adulthood. But that's not always easy. Here are Marti's suggestions for effective communication with your adolescent child:

### I. Underlying issues: What's going on with adolescents that makes it challenging to maintain communication?

- The job of an adolescent is to “individuate” – becoming increasingly independent and ready for adult responsibility, but that doesn't always happen gracefully!
- Teens have an increasing need for privacy that often is at odds with their parents' need to know what they are up to
- Teens do want their parents in their lives, but they want them available on their terms, when and where they want; technology and our busy lives make it difficult to find time for communication on anyone's terms

### II. Tips for parents

- Create space and time for unhurried conversation  
*Sitting down together over a favorite snack or riding side-by-side in the car often support conversation. Disconnecting from your own electronics and being available when your teen first comes in the door can invite communication.*
- Be mindful of how you respond when your child confides  
*Listen more than you talk and hear the feelings behind your child's words. Don't lecture or be dismissive. Honor the trust your child showed you by confiding.*
- Don't interrogate unless you have good reason to suspect dangerous behavior
- For those of you with younger children, start now to build that trust  
*It's much easier to maintain effective communication than it is to build it from scratch if you haven't established it early in your child's life.*