

Checklist

IMPROVE Your RELATIONSHIP With Your TEENAGER



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15 POINT RELATIONSHIP CHECKLIST

No relationship is perfect, they'll have up and downs.

For even the most loving and conscientious of parents, maintaining a close relationship with your teen can be a challenge. The busyness of modern life has not made it any easier, as the controlled daily chaos often leaves our best intentions unrealised and unexpressed.

So much of relationship success is about consistency, doing the simple things regularly and well. This list contains 15 simple things any parent can do; and done consistently, will produce improved relationships.

There is nothing on this list that requires any extra training, money, or special talents or skills. Any parent can implement everything on this list. The key is actually doing it, and doing it consistently!

The risk of reading a list like this is to say *"I know all that!"* then continue on as normal without actually changing anything. Knowing what to do and doing it are 2 entirely different matters.

Honestly ask yourself "Am I actually doing these things or do I think knowing is the same as doing?"

Before you dismiss this and file in your computers trash, just do this simple exercise; read through the list and tick which ones you have achieved consistently over the last couple of months (and be honest.)

If you honestly have 15 ticks then please do 2 things;

1. Move this document to the computers trash bin,
2. Send me an email about how you developed the ability to be so consistent. (I'm serious)

For those that of you who recognise there are opportunities for improvement, I challenge you to implement this list over the next 3 months and I guarantee your relationship with your teenager will improve. BUT you have to actually put it into practice.

How to Use This Checklist

1. Read through the list and mark the habits you are already doing consistently (There are descriptions of each habit on the pages 3 & 4.)
2. For the ones that have no mark develop a plan to implement.
 - Make it a real plan with real strategy.
 - Put a note in your phone, diary, or computer to remind you for each task,
 - Discuss with your partner or a friend about helping remind each other and keep each other accountable.
3. To make the list easier to use and plan your improvement I have divided list into 4 sections - **Daily Habits, Weekly Habits, Periodic** (every month or so), **Always** (no way to plan this, but you should sit down and review occasionally to make sure you are doing these.)

If you do decide to make some changes, I would love to know how you go. It is always encouraging for me to see people take action and try to improve. So, send me an email about your journey, success or failure, and let me know what worked for and what didn't.

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Daily

- Connect with your teenager
- Tell them you love them
- Know where they are

Weekly

- Have a regular family meal together
- Have One on One time with your teen
- Ask your teen their opinion
- Encourage your teen
- Show interest in something your teen likes
- Ask them if everything is okay

Periodically

- Surprise your teen with a treat
- Review boundaries and give more freedom
- Celebrate their success

Always

- Treat them with respect
- Say sorry when you have stuffed up
- Listen, ask, respond - in that order

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Daily Habits

To be done every day, even if you are geographically apart. Use phones, Facebook, emails if you are not in the same place on any given day

Connect with your teenager - The minimum here is a conversation that involves finding out something about them and/ or you sharing something about you. It could be as simple as “What was the best thing about your day?” or “Guess what happened to me today?”

Tell them you love them - Doesn't have to be a big speech just a simple ‘I Love You’ every night when they go to bed, when you get home, or as they head off to school.

Know where they are - Taking the effort to know where your teenager is conveys to your teen that you care about them (even though they might make out you are being unreasonable). It is also a wise thing to do as a responsible parent.

Weekly Habits

These things aren't by any means restricted to only once per week, but in many modern homes achieving each of these once a week is no small effort. But, if you can schedule each of these activities into your weekly routine both you and your teen will benefit.

Have family meals together - this means everyone who lives at home sits down around a table to share a meal at the same time with no TV, no Phones on, no iPads or computers at the table. Only eating and talking face to face allowed.

Have one on one time with your teen - Just you and your teenager. At a minimum, this could be the drive to music lessons or sporting practice, while being intentional about the conversation. But if possible find a time where the two of you get to do something together for at least half an hour.

Ask your teen their opinion - When watching TV, or listening to music on radio, or just talking about something you heard during the day, make an effort to ask your teen what they think about it and try to find out more about why they think the way they do.

Encourage your teen - This doesn't mean sprout empty praise to your teen. Tell them something you appreciate about them, affirm them when you see them trying hard, congratulate them if they achieve, thank them for their contribution and tell them what it means to you, tell them you are proud of them.

Show interest in something your teen likes - Watch their favourite TV show with them, watch them play a computer game (offer to play too even if you are hopeless), take interest in a new app on their phone, watch their game on the weekend, sit in and listen to them practice piano... just show an interest in something they like.

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Ask them if everything is okay - Just ask a simple question, don't interrogate. Expect 99% of the time for your teen to simply say "Yep" or "Sure", what matters is you ask regularly so that on the 1% of the time things aren't okay they know you care enough for them to share with you.

Periodically

These activities don't work on a weekly basis but are more suited to less regular time intervals. But just because they are not regular does not mean they are optional. Make a plan to do these just as you would the other activities on the checklist.

Surprise your teen with a treat - for no reason other than you value them. This is not to be a reward for an achievement, but rather purely spontaneous expression of love for your teen. It doesn't have to be expensive, cook their favourite dinner, leave a favourite chocolate bar on their pillow, take them to their favourite cafe after school, relax their curfew for one night, or let them have a movie marathon of their choosing.

Review boundaries and give more freedom - If our teen has been responsible and demonstrated trustworthiness initiate a change in a boundary that allows more freedom; like later lights out on school night, later curfew, more time with technology, greater access to the car.

Celebrate their success - When your teen does achieve, be sure to acknowledge it. It could be through a special meal, a small present, a big hug and dance around the room, inviting friends over. NOTE success can be they put in a massive effort and persisted through a challenge, as well as winning or achieving a certain level of attainment.

Always

This is the stuff of life that you can't plan, but just have to learn to do. The way to plan to improve at this is to set aside some time every month or so to think back over your behaviour and note where you have done well and areas you need to improve. If possible, an even better way is to sit down with your partner and do the review on each other (if you don't have a partner asking a close friend to help you be accountable.)

Treat them with respect - Regularly check, or ask your partner if you can, have you spoken to your teen respectfully, not used insulting names, said please and thank you regularly, honoured their privacy etc.

Say sorry when you have stuffed up - Pretty easy to do; surprising how often parents don't

Listen, ask, respond - in that order - Try to get into the habit of listening to what your teenager has to say, ask questions about why they did or didn't do something, and once they have had an adequate chance to describe, explain, and share, only then do you get to offer your opinion or response. This takes a lot of self-control, but if you can do it, your response will generally be more constructive and compassionate.