



## **How can we communicate when we don't speak the same language?**

**We're not talking about people from two different countries but rather parents and teenagers. Parents want to be involved in their children's lives not matter what the age...but too often the close relationship that they had with their 10 year old dissolves into frustration and anger with their teenager.**

**As parents, we want our children to grow into self-sufficient, confident, independent adults. However, teens tell us that we send a mixed message when we make requests to know about their whereabouts, activities, friends, and relationships. The fine line between control and support seems to change daily. How can we stay involved in our teen's life yet give them the freedom to grow and mature?**

**Parents who maintain open, positive, and supportive communication with their teens have been shown to create the kind of relationships that encourages meaningful communication without the stereotypical "teen blackout". Reasonable control, consistency, warmth and support are the most effective aspects of parent/teen interaction.**

**The first and most important is to keep talking and stay involved in your teen's life. You should always know where your teen is, who they are with, what are they doing, and when will they return. These are not demands but simple expectations that should be established and enforced from the time your child first steps out the door in your neighborhood.**

**Active listening is a key component of communication. Take the time to hear what your teen is saying. Set a time each day to exchange the events of the day. Undivided attention is essential. Asking questions, sharing similar experiences, making suggestions, and stating your understanding of their issues and problems are necessary and should be established as a pattern early in your child's life. Make certain that you respect their opinions – they may differ from yours.**

**Some suggestions for talking with your teen:**

- 1. Find out what interests your teen – include some of their interests as you talk.**
- 2. Give them your full attention. Set aside a specific time each day to talk.**
- 3. Start early in establishing communication. If you have a pattern of communication, it will continue.**
- 4. Plan family time. The whole family needs to communicate.**
- 5. Remember a short conversation is better than no conversation. Any exchange that opens conversation is good.**
- 6. Try to make contact every morning before the family goes its different ways.**
- 7. Be positive. Teen times can be trying for both you and your teen**
- 8. Hold off on criticism until you have had a chance to say something positive. Some experts recommend a three to one ration of praise to concerns.**

