

15 Things Your PRETEEN Wants to Tell You

“Why won’t my preteen talk to me?”

1. LISTEN. Listening is the first step to carrying on a conversation with your preteen. Ask her questions about things that interest her. Give her a chance to think about how to answer. Give your child your full attention when she is talking to you.

2. ENCOURAGE RATHER THAN CRITICIZE. One of the fastest ways to close down communication with your preteen is to criticize her. Last year, I heard a mother berate her son in public. “I don’t know why I’m stuck with this kid. He is such a problem. Sure, he made all-honors band, but he can’t even get on the academic honor roll just one time!” Her son just stared down at his feet. He obviously believed what she said. Promise not to criticize, nag, or make fun of your child.

3. BE WILLING TO THINK ABOUT AND CONSIDER YOUR PRETEEN’S REQUESTS. Respect your child’s desires and opinions. When you cannot agree, try a compromise that will benefit both of you. Guide her to make right choices rather than simply laying down the law.

4. DO NOT FEED THE BEAR. Read the body language of your preteen. When they are feeling like “bears.” It is best not to approach a “bear” when he is hurting, hungry, or angry. Instead, wait for the right moment to talk. Do not

try to start a deep discussion right after you have punished your preteen.

5. KNOW WHEN TO STOP TALKING. Preteens have said that they hear what their parents say the first time. They tune out parents who say the same thing over and over.

6. COMMUNICATE IN WRITING. Thanks to the Internet, many preteens are putting their thoughts and feelings into words. A creative child might be more willing to write a letter telling you what is wrong than blurting the words out all at once.

7. DO NOT PUNISH YOUR PRETEEN FOR TELLING THE TRUTH. Reward your preteen for coming to you with her problems. Consider a lesser punishment for any wrong action they willingly confess. Although there are still consequences for breaking the rules, there are lesser consequences for telling the truth.

8. DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP BEFORE YOU TRY TO TALK TO YOUR PRETEEN. Take time to enjoy your child. Start with something small such as going out for ice cream. Have fun together. Do not make every moment you spend together seem like a family meeting.

9. DO NOT TELL OTHER PEOPLE YOUR PRETEEN’S SECRETS. Keep your preteen’s confidence. One girl was humiliated when her mother told friends and family members that her daughter started puberty.

10. APPRECIATE YOUR PRETEEN’S DREAMS. Find out what your preteen is interested in and talk about those things. If your daughter loves horses, ask her to describe her perfect horse. Even better, help her find one to ride for an afternoon. Let your child know you appreciate and believe in her dreams.

- 11. RELATE YOUR EXPERIENCES BUT DO NOT PREACH.** Express sympathy. Share what you did to get through difficult times. Let her know that you understand without minimizing her problems.
- 12. TALK TO YOUR PRETEEN ABOUT GOD.** Study the Bible together. Pray together. Let your child hear you pray for her every day. Talk about God's plan for your family. Ask your preteen to tell you her thoughts on God and the Bible.
- 13. DO NOT TELL YOUR PRETEEN TO DO ONE THING AND THEN DO THE OPPOSITE.** Your child will not listen to you if your actions do not match your words. The excuse, "Because I'm the adult" does not work.
- 14. GO TO A PLACE WHERE YOU BOTH CAN BE COMFORTABLE TALKING.** It seems that children tell their deepest secrets sitting at the kitchen bar, eating homemade chocolate chip cookies. Find the place and time your preteen is most willing to talk.
- 15. SAY "I LOVE YOU" EVERY DAY.** Tell your preteen you love her by your actions. Brag on her when she can hear you. Smile when she walks into a room. Make her feel that you know you are the luckiest parent in the world because she belongs to you!

*All preteens are different.
Why not ask your child how you can best talk to her?
You might be surprised at her response!*

