

## Connolly Counselling Centre

# Effectively Communicate with your Adolescent Child

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Adolescence is a tough and confusing time, both on the growing child and also the parent. As they grow, teenagers tend to pull away from their parents and begin asserting their own independence, often pushing boundaries and experimenting with new experiences, that at times have real consequences. This can often make parenting difficult however, a healthy and trusting parent-child relationship is more important than ever during this time period.

As your teenager grows, the way in which you communicate with them will need to change in order to reflect and respect the new boundaries in your relationship. They may not open up about their lives as much as they use to but that's normal. They are beginning to grow up and trying to figure out their own identity. You are still an important part of that life though and by **effectively communicating** with your teenager you can help foster a healthy parent-child relationship that is crucial throughout their adolescent years.

### Here are some tips to start effectively communicating

- **Listen:** Teenagers are more likely to open up to their parents when they don't feel pressured to share information. Sitting back and listening, along with staying open and interested are often more effective than direct questions.
- **Avoid leading questions:** It's important to not always assume what is going on in your teenager's life. Using general questions instead of leading questions may help them open up about various topics or issues they may be facing.
  1. *Leading Question:* "What problems are you having at school?"
  2. *General Question:* "Do you mind telling me what's been happening?"
- **Show validation, empathy and trust:** At times parents tend to try and solve problems for their child or downplay their disappointments (loss of a friendship; relationship issues; school problems). However showing that you understand and empathize with their feelings and trusting that they can solve their own problems will help in boosting their own self confidence and esteem. If they need help with an issue trust that they will come to you for advice or assistance.
- **Control your emotions:** Teenagers sometimes lash out and be rude and it can be difficult to not respond in the same manner however try to remember that their brains are still developing and that they are currently unable to fully regulate and control their emotions. If you feel your own emotions rising take a deep breath or a pause from the conversation.

- **Spend time together:** Teenagers are naturally busy people as they attempt to balance their school life, personal life and social life, however setting aside some informal time each day to hang out and chat, be it over breakfast, dinner or during a car ride can help maintain a healthy relationship.