

- **5 EASY THINGS THAT KEEP YOU CLOSE TO YOUR TEENAGER**

1. **Try and remember what it was like to BE a teenager**...with their life experiences, needs and desires. Many times when parents take themselves back (in their minds) to their teenage years, it helps them re-gain that youthful perspective, and it helps them be more empathetic. What's that well-known advice? "If you want to really understand a person, walk a mile in his shoes."
2. **Be interested in what they're interested in.** Kids know when we're faking it. Take the time to learn about your teenager's hobbies, activities and interests. Go to his games, his concerts and his special school events. Make sure that you give him 'prime time' instead of 'leftover time.' Teenagers will be impressed that you gave them your prime time...and they'll love you for it.
3. **Share your heart with them.** How do we have a close relationship with anyone? We share our heart-felt feelings with them. We ask their opinion about things in our lives. So do the same with your teenagers if you want to be close: share your concerns, your joys and sorrows. When you do this, your teenagers will likely reciprocate and tell you the feelings of their hearts. Priceless moments communicating deeply with your teenager will bond you to them. And LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN. With your whole heart listen and try to understand what they're not saying sometimes. Read between the lines and don't expect them to explain everything perfectly...they're still maturing and often they don't know how to express their inner feelings. Help them out by asking appropriate, gently questions...but mostly just listen and be there.
4. Frequently the analogy is made about deposits and withdrawals when talking about raising children. It's a good analogy and applies well in our discussion about teenagers. The advice is this: **Make lots and lots of deposits into your children's emotional bank account.** In other words, give them love, praise, appreciation, your time, your help, respect, empathy, etc. Show them with countless acts of love and service that you care about them deeply and you want them to be happy and live a good life. Then, when you require a deposit – like when you discipline them or you expect them to obey even when they don't want to – they will be FAR more likely to accept that deposit and comply. Keep the bank account with your teenagers in the black...with more deposits than withdrawals. This will contribute significantly to a close, healthy relationship.
5. **Don't sweat the small stuff** – adjust to their age-related needs and don't expect way too much from them. **And have a sense of humor!** Be a fun parent – one that your teenager and their friends like to be around. Laugh and joke with them – they love it! And invite their friends over to your fun-filled (and refrigerator filled) home. In short, have a good time with your kids during their teenage years!