

*Lawyer Assistance Program Wellness Tip Sheet*  
*MSBA*

**How to Develop a Good Relationship with your Teen**

*The Teen Years*

The teen years are some of the most challenging years for parents as well as for children. Teens experience a multitude of changes during this time including physical, emotional, and social. They need you more now than ever. Although they may seem like they are not listening to you they do consider their parents' values, opinions and actions when making decisions.

*Tips for Effective Communication*

Communication is the single most important aspect in developing a healthy relationship with your child and being an effective parent. Letting your child know you are there for her and taking the time to listen to and talk to your teen helps to build a strong relationship. Being an effective communicator helps create an open, honest and safe environment for your teen. Your child will be more willing to talk with you when she knows you will listen to her.

- **Start young.** Talking to your children before they even can talk creates trust and a bond that will be easier to continue when they are teens. Keeping a relationship going is easier than trying to develop one when they are older.
- **Have a time each week to spend quality time with your teen where you won't be interrupted.** Giving your teen your full attention will show her how important she is to you. A recent study showed that teens feel they don't have enough time with their parents and that their parents are always at work or involved in other activities. They really want your attention even when they sometimes seem like they don't care.
- **Be aware and respond to nonverbal communication.** This will help you child recognize and express her emotions. For example, if your child rolls her eyes, you might say, "I see that you are rolling your eyes. Do you disagree with what I'm saying? Can you tell me what your thoughts are?"
- **Show your teen that you are listening and interested in what she has to say.** Put away the cell phone, TV remote and any other technical device you may have and give your teen your full attention. Make eye contact, nod occasionally, say "uh-huh" and smile when appropriate to let your child know that you are interested in what she is saying.
- **Don't be judgmental.** Your teen will likely say things that you disagree with. Listen openly without interrupting. Ask her what her opinion is. If you judge her she may not talk with you again.
- **Have dinner at the table with the whole family as often as possible.** With all the activities that children are involved in this may be difficult to do every night. Making an effort to have dinner together builds relationships and communication among family members.

***If you would like more tips on communicating with your teen call the Lawyer Assistance Program for free, confidential assistance at 410-685-3041 or toll free at 800-492-1964.***

