



Building a Respectful Relationship

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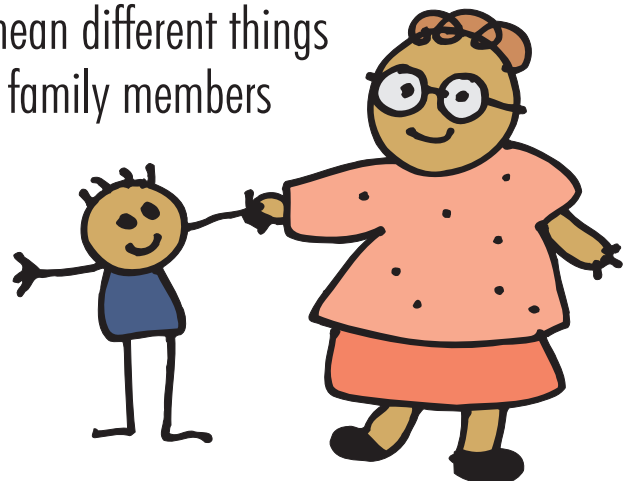
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Relationships between parents and teenagers sometimes can be challenging, and may include periods of difficulty. Parents and teens may have to think about how to overcome hurt feelings or reconnect with each other in a personal way. For example, if you have been separated for a time or gotten angry with each other, focusing on the chance to build a respectful relationship together is important. An important step is to connect with your teenager and spend some time learning about him or her. Then, you can start building a relationship that involves respect for each of you.

Respect may mean different things to different family members, but certain aspects of being respectful are fundamental to all relationships. Respect is about being considerate, appreciative, thinking about another person positively and treating the other person in ways you would like to be treated. Respect is important in families because it builds connection, trust and communication. A respectful relationship will allow you and your teen to feel good about yourselves and your relationship. Respect will help you talk to each other, listen to each other and treat each other in a positive manner.

Respect may mean different things to different family members



What is Respect?

First, figuring out what respect means to you and your teen is important.

Take some time with your teen to discuss the following questions.

Write down your thoughts and keep them in a place where you can access them easily. Try posting your answers to your refrigerator, the bathroom mirror or in your living room.

Answer these questions first, and then have your teen answer each question.

*What feelings come to mind
when you think about respect?*

*What actions come to mind
when you think of respect?*

How do you define respect?

*What do you hope your respectful
relationship together will look like?*

Learning from Other Respectful Relationships

Don't worry if developing a respectful relationship right away is difficult for you and your teen. Respect is something that takes time to build. You may have to change some old patterns of thought or behavior, or your teen may need to learn some ways of thinking and acting that are more respectful. Thinking about what respect means to each of you, what feelings and actions go along with respect, and what you think your respectful relationship together might look like also might take some time.

At first, thinking about other relationships might be easier. Ask yourself the following questions: (1) What relationships have I observed where people treat each other respectfully? (2) How do I know these relationships are respectful?

Doing this exercise might make thinking about respect easier for you. You can ask your teen the same questions to help him or her get a better idea of what a respectful relationship is like.

Setting an Example of Respect

You are more likely to build a respectful relationship with your teen by showing him or her a positive example of how to be respectful. Having a role model in their lives – someone they can look up to, learn things from and model their behaviors after – is important for teens. What are they learning about being respectful from you? Think about it. You have many ways you can set an example of respect for your teen!

Here are some ideas:

- Listen to your teen – invite your teen to share with you.
- Share positive thoughts with your teen. Let your teen know how you appreciate and care about him or her. Share with your teen the strengths you see him or her possessing.
- Model the behavior you would like your teen to do, and treat your teen the way you would like to be treated.
- Treat other adults, friends and family members respectfully and your teen will learn this kind of behavior from you.

Living with Respect

Once you and your teen have thought about what respect means to each of you, talking about how you would like to live with respect in your family is important. Talk with your teen about ways you each can live with respect together. For example, do you hope your teen will help out with family chores? Or does your teen hope

you will listen before getting upset with him or her? Find out what really is important to your relationship.

Here are some tips for a respectful relationship:

- Listen when you are talking with each other.
- Remember your definition of respect when you feel upset or angry.
- Ask yourself, "What would being respectful cause me to do right now?"
- Talk in a calm voice as much as you can when you feel upset.
- Remember to tell your teen how much you appreciate him or her.
- Avoid making comments that embarrass, hurt or humiliate the other person.
- Take a break from interacting with your child if either of you is becoming too angry or upset to be respectful.
- Acknowledge a person's feelings and discuss how to deal with hurt or troubled feelings ahead of time.
- Take a few moments to apologize if you have the need to do so.

Reminder for Caregivers

Caregivers need to remember what the growing-up years can be like for a teenager. It can be a tough time for some teens at this stage in their life. For some teens to want independence is common, and they might rebel, or you might feel they aren't listening to you. This could lead to some conflict, but remember that most teens want to have a respectful relationship with their caregivers.

Conclusion

If these suggestions are not working for your family, seek additional help through other resources. Valuable resources include your support systems, such as family, friends, neighbors and community professionals. Helpful information always is available in books, newsletters and classes, and through family counseling or therapy. Counseling can provide families with additional tools to overcome difficult times.

Helpful Phone Numbers

North Dakota Helpline
211 or (800) 472-2911

Badlands Human Service Center
(888) 277-7525

Or call your local NDSU Extension Service county office to find phone numbers for agencies that can assist you.

*Regional Parent Resource Centers with the NDSU Extension Service also have information available to provide phone numbers of other agencies to assist you. A local NDSU Extension agent also can provide information for you.

Helpful Resources for Caregivers

Teaching Guide: Respecting Others for grades 5-9. This Web site offers ideas on how to treat people respectfully. This Web site offers discussion questions you could have with your teen. To read, go to www.goodcharacter.com/BCBC/RespectingOthers.html.

Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully. This Web site offers ideas on how to handle problems with respect. To read, go to <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5218.html>.

References

Molgaard, V. (1996) Stress taking charge: Managing conflict with teens. Retrieved from www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1660G.pdf on Nov. 14, 2005.

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