

Creating Space for the Second Birth

Communication between adolescents and parents is one of the most difficult things in the realm of family relationships. Author Amparo Moreno in her book “La Adolescencia”, calls this stage “The period of a second birth”, as a new expression on the transition period from child to young adult; the different modifications given in the body structure, thinking, identity, and the way of interacting with family and society. Sometimes, parents don’t know how to communicate with their children because they are no longer the young child that they knew. Here are some ideas from the University of Alabama Extension to apply in 2024.

Be Clear and Calm. State clearly and in details your expectations, the reason, and the consequences if not followed. If your teens break the rules, take a break, and relax before you talk with them. Once you feel calm, sit down with them, and let them know why you are disappointed in their actions, what the consequences are for the actions, and what actions you want them to take in the future. Teens need you to have rules for their behavior. They need to understand the rules, which should be appropriate for their ages. When you remain calm, you help your teens to be calmed, and you get your message across the way you intend.

Listen. Find a quiet place to hear what your teens are saying and ensure you understand their point of view. Give them your full attention by looking at them while they talk and nodding. Share what you heard them say and ask if you got it right. Teens want to feel that they matter. Listening to them is a powerful way to let them know they are essential to you. Teens will seek out people who listen to them. You want to be one of those people!

Accept. Tell your teens often that you love them. Tell them what you think is unique and wonderful about them every week. When your teens disappoint you, tell them you are disappointed in the behavior, not in them. They need to feel that you accept who they are, even when they do things you do not like. Teens learn best from their mistakes. Feeling special and understood is what helps a teen have better self-worth.

Support. If your teens say they need you, make yourself available to help with problems and decisions. Let them know that you do not expect perfection. When they make mistakes, allow them to learn vital lessons and think about ways not to repeat the same mistakes. Being there to help when your teens need it, allowing them to make mistakes along the way, is helping them to gain the strength they need to be independent of you when the time comes.

Seek Solutions. Tell your teens that you want to work through the problem with them. Let them know that you believe there is a way to solve it. Talk together about what each of you thinks might make things better. Communicating this belief helps teens feel better about their abilities to make positive life changes. If you and your teens cannot find a solution, find other people to help. Family members, friends, or professionals can assist you and your teens in working through complex problems.