

WHEN NOT TO SAY “NO” TO YOUR TEEN

It’s interesting how many questions our kids ask when they’re young. As they become teens, they slowly stop asking, but just because your teens aren’t asking you questions doesn’t mean they don’t have them. There are certain things every teenager needs. Answers to their most pressing questions are among them. And they’re trying to figure out whether you’ll answer.

No doubt the teenage years can be tough, but with a little wisdom and a ton of patience, you can navigate these years well, connect more deeply with your teens, and send them out of the house with confidence—especially if you always answer “yes” when your teens ask these 5 questions.

1 Can I ask your advice?

One of the most important things every teenager needs is advice. I realize the likelihood of teens specifically asking you for advice is slim, but when they do, drop what you’re doing and make eye contact. Listen to what their questions are and help them. If they don’t ask for it, ask them if they want your advice before you give it. They may initially say no, but if you honor their requests, they may circle back and ask for it later. We all know that if people don’t want advice, they won’t take it. Best-case scenario, they will say yes, which gives you permission to offer your wisdom and guidance.

What is one piece of advice you were told as a teen that has stayed with you as an adult?

2 Can we talk?

When our teens ask if they can talk to us, our immediate answer shouldn’t just be “yes” but “always!” When teens ask if they can talk to you, it’s because it’s extremely important to them and they need your encouragement, support, and help. We should make eye contact, listen, and ask questions. Don’t rush to judgment or jump to conclusions. Get a full picture of the situation and ask what they need help with. Remember, this will most likely be at the most inconvenient of times (like right before bed), but say yes anyway. Teens don’t open up often, but when they want to, let them.

What was the last meaningful conversation you had with your teen? Was it planned or unplanned?

3 Can you show me how to...?

I love when teens ask their parents this question because it's a great opportunity for you not only to show your teens how to do something but also to connect with them and build memories. If you want to take the initiative, ask your teens to join you when you're working on something. This could be a home project, changing a tire, or even work stuff. Simply ask, "Hey, would you want to learn how to (fill in the blank)?" Teens love being included on "adult" stuff. It prepares them and makes them feel seen and empowered.

What was the last thing your learned together with your teen?

4 Can I do this on my own?

When you say yes to allowing your teen to do something on his or her own, what you communicate is that you have confidence in them and believe they have what it takes to be successful. This could be in decision-making as well. Allow your teens to make decisions on their own and coach them through the process. It's OK if they fail every once in a while. Remember that as a parent you aren't raising kids—you're raising young adults. Saying yes to giving your teens opportunities to do things on their own is a great way to prepare them for adulthood.

What do you wish your teen did on their own?

5 Can you tell me what you think of me?

One of the major things every teenager needs is your answer to this question. Understand your teens may not ask you this question directly, but every single day, they are asking it. They are looking to you as a parent to tell them who they are. They desperately need you to help them find their identity. Tell your teens often that you love them and how highly you think of them. When you tell them, be sure to compliment the character traits you see and not simply their successes. For example, if your daughter has a great basketball game and scores a ton of points, focus less on her performance and more on the hard work she put in to accomplish her success.

Do you praise your teen for who they are or for what they do?
