

10 Things Parents Can Do to Promote Healthy Relationships

1. **Be there.** Young people might not say it directly, but they *want* a positive and caring adult in their life. Even if few words are exchanged, your presence lets them know that you're there when they need you.
2. **Know s/he is watching you.** Your child watches everything you say and do – your way of talking, your sense of humor, how you deal with stress and conflict, and how you treat others. Your child takes cues from you, both good and bad.
3. **Show respect.** Make respect your way of dealing with people. Young people learn respect by watching how you and other adults treat others. That means your actions while in traffic, in restaurants, in the backyard, or at the dinner table all matter.
4. **Teach your son/daughter about the importance of healthy relationships.** In a healthy relationship, respect is mutual. Communication, equality, trust, and non-violence are essential.
5. **Offer alternatives to violence.** Share strategies for handling violent or abusive situations and ways to stay safe like calling you or a teacher when they're in trouble or the police if in immediate danger. Tell them what they can do if they see violence, particularly against girls, while at school or otherwise. There are resources available such as the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline (1-866-331-9474).
6. **Ask about their world.** Find out who your son or daughter's favorite people are like sports figures, celebrities, or people in your neighborhood. Ask them who they respect and why. Let them know that people who disrespect others are not admirable and point them to people who are.
7. **Listen.** When young people get frustrated and mad, tell them they can walk it off or talk it out with you or a friend. Let them know they can come to you anytime they feel like things are too stressful or out of hand.
8. **Discuss the rules.** Kids need to understand limits. Family and school rules about treating others with respect must be talked about and reinforced. When it comes time for dating, be sure they know that treating people with love and respect is what it means to care for someone.
9. **Take advantage of "Teachable Moments".** Use a relevant, real-life situation to teach your child about the importance of respect, positive role models, and the characteristics of healthy relationships. These everyday examples are Teachable Moments.
10. **We all make mistakes.** Young people (and parents) aren't perfect. The goal is to learn from the past to make a better future.