

# 7 PARENTING STRATEGIES

## *To Strengthen Your Relationship With Your Teen*

### 1. OBSERVE WITH CURIOSITY

- Observing with curiosity is about gathering data, or the facts. Take care to not attach meaning to the behavior or engage in interpretation of the behavior.
- Instead, start a conversation with your teen where you present the facts and allow your teen to provide the meaning; no one knows your teen better than your teen him/herself.
- When you observe with curiosity, you open yourself to be a part of the solution rather than further contributing to the problem.

### 2. BE UNAPOLOGETICALLY YOURSELF

- Being unapologetically yourself means that you are granting yourself permission to express, in an appropriate manner (assertively), what you think or how you feel without regret, guilt, a sense of obligation to others, or a fear that you are going to offend or upset someone.
- When your teen witnesses you routinely apologizing for your thoughts and feelings, your teen could interpret this as him or herself being (feeling and thinking they are) responsible for other people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Being unapologetically yourself also means granting yourself permission to be imperfect. Mistakes are an essential part of the human experience and provide the opportunity for learning and growth.
- When you as a parent make a mistake, it is important for your teen to observe you not denying or defending the mistake but being accountable and engaging in problem-solving to make corrections and make amends.
- As you go through the process, discuss your thoughts, feelings, actions, challenges and opportunities presented for learning.

### 3. SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

- It means that when you are talking to a teen, you should be authentic and congruent. This is to be honest, to have your inward thoughts and feelings match your outward expression.
- Many teens are human lie detectors; teens instinctively understand when they are being misled or manipulated. There might be times in which you, as a parent might not want to share information with your teen, and with good reason.
- Perhaps it is because the information is personal, outside their developmental understanding, something that will cause needless pain, or something that is not of concern to them. In this instance, authenticity and congruency means to share such with them.



### 4. HUMOR

- It means to laugh; laughter neutralizes frustration and irritation and can be utilized to cope with situations when they become tense. However, take caution with humor to ensure that it is not utilized to maliciously degrade someone, passive-aggressively attack someone, or make the situation worse.
- Perhaps wait until the situation has passed and the heightened emotions of all involved have leveled out to some extent.
- You can even use humor to engage with your teen by acting goofy and poking light fun of yourself by taking a silly selfie; send it to your teen as a matter of subtly 'checking-in' on them while they are out with friends - they can tease you with their friends without feeling frustrated and embarrassed about their "overbearing parent" keeping track of them.



# PARENTING STRATEGIES CONTINUED...



## 5. KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY, KNOW WHEN TO RUN AWAY

- It means to be able to assess a situation between yourself and your teen as it is occurring to determine whether the situation is able to be diffused or if it has escalated such that all attempts to do so should be aborted in the immediate, and the situation reevaluated at a later time.
- The goal is to snuff the emotional flame before there is a reaction fire and you and your teen end up making comments to one another that you or your teen regret.

## 6. JUST SAY "F\_\_ \_ IT"

- It means to decide what is worth investing your time and energy in when it comes to parenting. In other words, pick and choose the battles you engage in with your teen.
- Take care to not monitor your teen at every moment; when you monitor all of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, there is a tendency to want to prevent them from going ahead and perhaps making a mistake.
- When a teen is permitted to make mistakes, there is an opportunity to practice taking accountability and also problem-solving.



## 7. SO WHAT?

- Despite our best efforts as parents of teens, our interactions with them will not always have the outcome we had hoped for. At some point, you are going to find that you will lose your shit over seemingly "big things," that when you take a step back from the situation, you realize are "little things."
- No need to be difficult with yourself; when you find yourself over-invested, over-emotional, and doubting your abilities as a parent raising a teen, remember to ask yourself "So What?" After all, as the parent of a teen, at the core of your parenting philosophy, is a sense that all intentions are based in LOVE.
- If you focus too greatly on the "little things," the message you risk sending your teen is that you care more about the "little things" than you care about them. In the end, the little things won't matter - preserve the relationship with your child - your words and your actions leave a lasting impression.

# SO WHAT?