

## Communication, Connecting & Being a Better Family

### **Minimizing Conflict**

Teenagers are often upset, confused, frustrated and depressed as they try to learn about being an adult and face problems on their own. It can be difficult to know how to respond to these feelings.

Arguing, ordering, lecturing, ignoring or being angry with teenagers will not solve any problems your child is having. Instead, show them you understand or are trying to understand by:

- Listening to them
- Showing you are listening by looking at them
- Talking about the feeling as well as the action
- Not assuming you know the meaning of what they say-let them tell you
- Not judging or analyzing them
- Asking about what they are doing, what they are interested in or what they think about issues without prying
- Sharing your feelings with them

### **Negotiation**

Problem solving is a process which helps you and your teenager negotiate solutions to problems. It requires basic ideas and attitudes. Cooperation only happens when you respect each other. Teenagers and parents have to be willing to listen, ask questions and share feelings. Conversation should be directed at talking about the underlying problem rather than trying to win or gain control or prove right and wrong. You must each take responsibility for your own actions, decisions and changes. Work at making a decision which is favorable to both parties. At times negotiations breakdown. If this happens stop for a while and have time away from each other.

## **Solving Problems**

Exploring alternatives can help you and your teenager solve problems. It can help avoid arguments and help teenagers learn to solve their own problems. If your child comes to you with a problem:

- Help them work out what it is and get as much information possible.
- Get them thinking, ask what ideas or solutions they have thought of or what they would suggest to a friend in the same position.
- Don't judge them
- Make suggestions but don't force them to make a decision
- Set a time to see how it's going so you can talk about it again.