

93 Ways to Connect with Teens



for Grown-ups





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Notes

Yes, 93 ways to connect with teens. Why 93?

No reason. It's a random number. I guess I figured it deserved a chance to headline an article...poor number 93 doesn't get nearly enough attention. Numbers like 3 and 10 and 99 always steal the spotlight.

Really, the number isn't the point. The point is, there are a LOT of great ways to connect with teens. If you're having trouble finding common ground or getting through, read through this list for some inspiration. Already rocking a tight relationship with the young humans in your life? Bravo. Still, there's always room for improvement, right? Who knows? You might find something here you've never thought to try.

1. Take them out to lunch with no agenda.
2. Take them to an unexpected event (and not Bingo night—something they'll enjoy).
3. Spend time hanging out and talking with their friends whenever you get the chance.
4. Write them a hand-written birthday card. Or just a note. Occasion not required.
5. Share your passions. If you're excited about you-name-it, they will catch on.
6. Never underestimate the power of free candy.
7. Make your email address available. Welcome text messages.
8. Lead by being a consistent example.
9. Use technology. Go to where they are; don't expect them to come to you.
10. **Care about what they care about.**
11. Send them an email to tell them you're proud of something cool you saw them do.
12. Send them a text message just to say what's up.
13. Attend their events—athletic games, band, theater, debate—and PAY ATTENTION.



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14. Teach them a proper handshake.
15. Encourage what they're good at. Encourage them to explore why (or even if) they love doing these things.
16. **Don't play favorites, ever.**
17. Acknowledge family hardships quickly and openly.
18. Apologize when you screw up quickly and openly.
19. Ask them what their favorite movie is and then watch it.
20. Pick up a teen magazine from time to time. Read it without criticism.
21. Ask them what they see themselves doing in the future.
22. Involve them in your decision-making processes.
23. Let them see you resolve conflict in a healthy manner.
24. Be yourself and let them be themselves, no matter how painful it is to watch.
25. Substitute "I" for "You." Can or do you follow your own advice?
26. Write down how adolescence was an adventure (for you) and share it with a teen; ask for their honest feedback on what you have in common.
27. Always be ready for an unexpected opportunity for connection. Never be "too busy."
28. **Agree on expectations and the consequences of not meeting them...in writing.**
29. Create family times around specific activities they've TOLD YOU they enjoy.
30. Think from their point of view before reprimanding or jumping to conclusions.
31. When dealing with irritating/chaotic behavior or mood swings, ask yourself right away, "What could I learn from this?"
32. Take an interest in their spiritual life. Explore different spiritual experiences, denominations, or practices with them.
33. If you catch them doing something right, praise them profusely and publicly (try not to be embarrassing, though).
34. When bad behavior arises, brainstorm ways you can INFLUENCE them to make a better choice instead of just FORCING them or making demands.
35. Give privileges that exceed "the norms" of age vs. responsibility. Start small, but increase privileges/responsibility as they prove themselves.

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36. Be their mentor and ally.
37. Talk through experiences and don't interject until you have really explored their perspective.
38. Be a fearless advocate, but constantly seek to understand where they want your advocacy. Don't fight for something they don't want.
39. Show true interest in their activities with your presence, support, and curiosity about their progress and developments.
40. Teens do want rules, limits, and questions from you; involve them in how those rules get formulated.
41. Don't establish a rule that you can't (respectfully) monitor and agree upon.
42. Set aside specific slots of time every week for interaction (and only interaction).
43. Ask open-ended questions that encourage a response.
E.g., "What subject do you think is really lame this year?"
"What are you enjoying most?" "Why?"
44. Acknowledge a teen's fears as "real," even if you don't agree with them. Never make fun of their vulnerabilities, no matter how "silly."
45. Rent a documentary on something they're interested in and watch it with them.
46. Allow them a variety of outlets for their energy; let them explore as many different activities and hobbies as possible.
47. Focus on the important boundaries, not the little infractions.
48. Seek to understand what your teen is really saying rather than reacting.
- 49. *Show (and tell) teens that you trust them to do what is right.***
50. Let them explain. Hear out a teen's reasons for wanting to do something in full.
51. Write down 5 ways you can make your your home, classroom, etc. a place where teens want to hang out. Do those things.
52. Talk about the lives, accomplishments, and even failings of extraordinary people. Ask teens who they admire and why.
53. Make a list of ten things you admire about them and tell them. Repeat often. Expand the list as necessary.
54. Point out an example in the news of how people are compassionate and empathetic.

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55. Don't avoid serious conversations or "heavy" topics like death, addictions, or STDs. If you are confident and comfortable talking about drinking, drugs, and sex, they'll listen.
56. *Lift the mood. Introduce a little fun once in awhile.*
57. Support your teen's interests and talk about their accomplishments to others, even if the teen isn't around.
58. Have regular one-on-one chats that are "quick and painless." Keep communication open and frequent.
59. Ask what worries them most about their future.
60. Use natural and logical consequences, so that discipline makes sense.
61. Teach respect for life in all forms.
62. Invite them. Ask if they would like to go out to eat, run an errand, or go shopping with you.
63. Talk to their friends, learn their names, and let them confide in you.
64. Serve together. Get involved in a volunteer activity or help in the community.
65. Learn more about their world—the books they read, the music they listen to, the shows they watch. SHOW INTEREST.
66. Believe they can make a difference and be a success. Tell them.
67. Show them you approve of them, often.
68. Show (relationship appropriate) physical affection/affirmation (e.g., parents, give 'em a hug; teachers, maybe a pat on the back; coaches, hand out high fives).
69. Say, "I'm proud of you," and mean it.
70. Show your teen respect.
71. Eat dinner together four to five days a week.
72. Never belittle teens in front of their friends. Ever.
73. Ask their opinions often and about much.
74. *Give them room to breath as they learn to balance independence with dependence.*
75. Celebrate a personal victory with them.
76. If you have the opportunity, travel with them. Explore new things.
77. Share concerns early and help equip them to avoid/conquer potential problems.

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78. Keep discussions with teens confidential, unless you both agree otherwise (or they are in imminent personal danger).
79. Always follow through on promises, no matter how small.
80. Allow your teen increased amounts of responsibility when you see them handling existing responsibility well.
- 81. Forgive teens as quickly as possible and say "I forgive you."**
82. Agree to accept all of a teen's feelings as long as they are respectfully conveyed.
83. Schedule times to talk about unappealing topics if they're not coming up naturally.
84. Always convey what a teen did right before and after offering constructive criticism.
85. Plan some random one-on-one time as a complete surprise.
86. Go watch an (appropriate) stand-up comedian or funny movie. Let them pick.
- 87. Ask them for help.**
88. Pick a recipe and cook something together.
89. Buy them a journal and encourage daily writing. Share something personal you've written and invite them to share with you.
90. Give them an iTunes gift certificate, no strings attached.
91. Go to an Apple store/record store/mall and hang out for a bit.
92. Remember, young people often become who you expect them to be. Aim high.
93. Just care.

Notes

Now...put these suggestions into practice. And have fun.
May your creative juices flow...

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About Josh Shipp

Josh Shipp is a teen advice guru, motivational speaker, marathon runner, and undisputed guitar hero. With more than a decade of hands-on, real-world experience, Josh has earned an international reputation as a leading authority on teen communication. Seen on MTV, CNN, NBC, FOX, Comedy Central, and featured in the LA Times, his inspiring personal story and life-changing message has reached more than a million teens... and counting. Say "hi" at HeyJosh.com.

About Hey Josh, LLC

Hey Josh, LLC is an integrated media platform created for one glorious purpose: to engage, inspire, and empower teenage humans and young adults, while helping those who care about these individuals find the courage and common ground to do the same.