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CONNECTING WITH YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILD

Find times to talk. While some kids aren't always ready to communicate when you are, look for openings during informal time with your tween. Set aside a time that works for both of you if it is a busy day.

Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer. Leave your questions open-ended. Rather than asking your tween if they had fun at a sleepover, ask did any of your friends do something funny?

Ask your child questions about the activities they are interested in.

Let your child be the teacher and you be the student. By allowing him/her to be an authority on a subject you are inviting him/her to open up and share with you in ways they might not otherwise do

Take on a project or activity that will either push both of you out of your comfort zone or engage in simple activities enjoyable for both of you

Invite friends to dinner (Always make time for family dinners) and include friends in conversations.

Try not to overreact if you are upset with a choice your preteen has made. Say what you feel, but try to maintain a neutral facial expression so they will be open to hearing your words rather than shut down

Trust is crucial. Your tween needs to know they can count on your discretion if they tell you something that is personal.

Empathize with and validate your child's feelings even if you don't agree with how they are behaving.

Surprise your child and give them something small and unexpected. They are straddling childhood and adulthood and gestures like notes under their pillow, a well timed text or small trinket reminds them that you care about them.

Read the same book, see the same movie talk about it.

Laugh together often.

Find something most every day to praise your child on.

