



United
Way



United Way of Utah County
EveryDay Strong

SAFE TO EXPLORE

HELPING TEENS WHO KEEP SECRETS AND HIDE
Make sure they know their choices won't change your love for them

EVERY
CHILD
EVERY
FAMILY
EVERY STEP
OF THE WAY.



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You can start building everyday resilience by fostering safety, connection, and confidence in the children around you.

In this workbook, we will focus on helping you strengthen your teens resilience through safety!

Even if teen's may be physically safe, they may not feel safe. They may be afraid of getting in trouble or letting a loved one down. A child who feels safe knows they can be themselves with you and trusts that you will always love them no matter what!

In our general handbook, we discuss six different aspects of safety for children. In this workbook, we will focus on safety to explore.





WHAT MAKES OUR TEENS FEEL SAFE TO EXPLORE?

Sometimes kids tell their therapist, “oh, I could never tell mom or dad that”—but not because they think they will get in trouble! Rather, they worry that it will break mom or dad’s heart. They worry that what they want for their life is different than the vision their parents have for them.

Help kids feel safe by **reminding** them, “no matter what you do, no matter who you love, or no matter what you want out of life, I will always be by your side and I will always love you.”



CREATING A SAFE SPACE?

When we quickly condemn actions we don’t approve of—such as swearing, tattoos, clothing choices, smoking, friends, not going to church, etc.— our teens can feel their relationship is endangered if they ever do any of those things. That reaction creates a feeling of a lack of safety in a relationship that can be harmful to teen’s ability to make their own wise choices.



“It’s often a challenge for parents to grant their teens increasingly more privacy and autonomy. But in order to develop good judgment, they need lots of opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them. Encourage their learning.”

- Annie Fox, M.Ed. 2015, 10 Tips for Improving Parent-Teen Relationships





AM I A SAFE SPACE?

Rate the following statements from 1-5. 1 meaning rarely, if ever, and 5 meaning almost always.

- _____ If I disagree with my teen, I ask questions and listen carefully to better understand their point of view before addressing my opinion.
- _____ My teen often comes to me with controversial topics.
- _____ When my teen comes to me, I ask whether they would like help or a listening ear.
- _____ I often express appreciation and offer support to my teen.
- _____ I admit fault when I make assumptions about my teen.
- _____ When my teen complains about my parenting, I ask for help to understand.
- _____ I listen as much as, if not more than, I talk.

_____ TOTAL SCORE



**“OUR ROLE AS ADULTS
IS NOT TO FORCE THEM
TO FOLLOW THE TRACK WE’VE
LAID OUT FOR THEM; IT’S TO HELP
THEM DEVELOP THE SKILLS TO
FIGURE OUT THE TRACK THAT’S
RIGHT FOR THEM.”**

*William Stixrud, Ph.D.,
Ned Johnson, 2018
The Self-Driven Child*



BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR TEEN

As adults, if a teen makes a decision we see as unwise, we tend to label them as immature or rebellious. When this happens, ask yourself what you can do to better understand why they made that decision.



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES PAIRED WITH YOUR “AM I A SAFE SPACE” TOTAL SCORE!



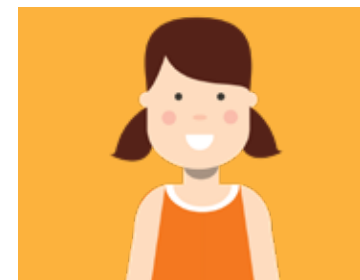
SCORED 7-18 POINTS:

We tend to make assumptions about our teen’s motives. When we do, they exclaim, “You never listen!” or “You wouldn’t understand”. **Try approaching decisions you don’t understand by asking curious questions.** As you teen talks to you, **imagine that you have tape over your mouth.** Stay engaged and continue to communicate in any way you can without speaking!



SCORED 19-25 POINTS:

We often think sharing our wisdom or opinion is best. When we do, teens tend to zone out and not listen. **Try answering teen’s questions without leaning one way or the other in your responses.** Your teen will listen, learn more, and make wiser decisions!



SCORED 26-35 POINTS:

Good job! You’re doing well. Let’s go to the next level! Can you create safety even when discussing a topic when you don’t agree? Try something the next time you and your teen talk about a topic where you don’t see eye to eye. **Take turns sharing meaningful points so that you can understand the other person’s point of view.**





PRACTICE WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND

Creating safety to talk along with safety to explore can help your teen be open with you! Boost your teen's problem-solving and decision-making skills as they learn more beside you. Grab a friend or your spouse and try each activity to practice creating that safety and see what you are best at!



ASK BEFORE ASSUMING

Once you create a safe space to talk for your teen, they will likely come to you with various struggles they experience. When this happens, it's easy to feel they want you to fix it, but sometimes they just want someone to listen and validate them.

Ask your partner to explain a situation they are struggling with.

Either before they start or once they finish speaking, ask whether they would like help or a listening ear.

APPRECIATING OTHER VIEWS

Growing up, did you ever tell your parents, "you wouldn't understand"? When we know someone won't agree with us, we avoid talking about it with them. Making a conscious effort to appreciate other views can make a big difference to our teens.

Brainstorm with your partner the pros and cons of a controversial topic.

Make it so the lists have an equal amount of meaningful points.



LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

When our teens tell us stories we tend to want to add to it or even relate to it. While doing both of these things are great, it is important to take the time to hear everything they have to say, first.

Ask your partner to tell you a story.

Physically put your hand over your mouth and keep a tally of how many times you want to talk.





START HERE

7 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEEN

- 1 Can you tell me about a time where you really felt my support?
- 2 What is the easiest thing to talk to me about?
- 3 What is the hardest thing to talk to me about?
- 4 What is one thing you would do if you knew no one would judge you?
- 5 What is the one thing adults don't get about teenagers?
- 6 What is your favorite thing I do as a parent/trusted, caring adult?
- 7 What do you wish I would do differently as a parent/trusted, caring adult?



YOUR FAVORITE QUESTION:





SELF-REFLECTION

Write your thoughts in the space below, in a journal, or on an electronic device.

Who is a teen I can help feel safe to explore?

When/Where might they not feel safe?

What further help do I need to provide that safety?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:



**Scan the code for a BONUS tip
and 5 question survey!**

