

GOD AND TEEN COUNSEL



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What should you do when a teen is frustrated with parents or some other circumstance **and comes to you?** Or, if a teen asks you questions that you feel their **parents** should be answering, what do you say or do? Here are a few general suggestions that may help you in counseling teens with the understanding that a teen's relationship with their parents is absolutely vital to their spiritual and emotional growth.

- First, most teenagers are unhappy at home. I (we) want to say, "Get over it" but that won't really help the situation. So, the thing to do is to ask them tons of questions (especially why questions) to get to the heart of the issue and the root of their behavior. Like, why do you think _____?, Why do you want to _____?, Why do your parents _____? This helps them think logically & spiritually through the situations.
- Second, show the teen that they may or may not be part of the problem. Every conflict involves sinners – because that is what everyone is. The fact of the matter is that we all do something to irk someone else. Parents irk their teens on occasion and teens irk their parents on occasion. So, the thing to do is to try and see if the teen is part of the problem by asking their responses (verbal & non-verbal) to parents, actions preceding and following the conflicts. If the teen is part of the problem then that is an area for them to work on. As parents see teens surrendering to the Spirit of God in their life then they often do the same. We all need a Savior!
- Third, show the teen that they are loved. Loved by God, by parents (even if it doesn't seem that way), by people at church and by many friends. This provides stability in their life to work through any issues and hopefully think through any actions they will take. Remember, sometimes love also means confronting the person on hard issues and showing the consequences of their sinful actions. So, try to show them the consequences of their actions and then provide a relationship they can depend on.
- Fourth, pray for and with the teen. This shows you are not getting/giving advice from the world but from God. God must be at the forefront of this relationship, as with any relationship. Don't be afraid to **use Scripture** as a guide – because it is!
- Fifth, refer the teen back to parents and/or to others (such as a Pastor or counselor). God's design is for parents to be involved in their kid's life. So, when they come to others they need to know that they are going outside of God's original design (Deuteronomy 6:1-7; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21). Sometimes this is ok and others it is not. The goal is for parents to be the primary relationship for love, discipline and instruction. Last to mention, in some cases it may be necessary to refer the student and family to a Biblical counselor trained in specific crisis issues. Such referrals can be made by pastors or other trusted family members and friends.

Excellent Resources:

The Bible, specifically Proverbs

Handbook on Counseling Youth by Josh McDowell

Journal of Biblical Counseling, Summer 2005, Volume 23, Number 3

Shepherding A Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp

Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens by Paul David Tripp