

## “Top Ten Ways to Make Your Teen Want to Hang Out With You”

*by Jim Burns, Ph.D.*

As kids move through the process of adolescence, they are engaged in the business of becoming a functioning, independent adult. During this time, some kids will give the impression that they don't want to spend time with their parents anymore. For a few, this may actually be the case, but for most kids – it is just part of that process of growing into adulthood. There will be times when kids want some distance. At other times, they will crave the warmth and connectedness provided by their parents and family. The key here is for parents to be proactive in maintaining relational connections with their kids: being wise to know when to allow kids to have the space they need to grow into the adults that we want them to become. If you are looking for ways to keep connected to your kids, here are ten practical tips to keep on the right track.

1) **Communicate with your kids.** Sure, you don't always want to talk and neither do your kids. Yet, you cannot have a solid, growing relationship (with anyone!) without communicating. Find a time when distractions can be held to a minimum and have a conversation with your teenager. Don't just talk about what you're interested in. Talk about anything and everything. Ask your kids about their interests, opinions and feelings. Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered yes or no. (Note: if you have not had a history of talking with your kids, getting started may seem a bit awkward to both you and your kids. Don't let this get in your way. Share with your kids what you are trying to do (build stronger relationships / reconnect) and start slowly with reasonable expectations. Just keep at it!)

2) **Listen.** Listening is the language of love. Through listening, you demonstrate that you value your kids. Many parents find it difficult to actively listen. Yet, when you take the time to really pay attention, show empathy and listen – you are taking a key step in reconnecting with your kids. When kids know that their fathers will really listen (instead of immediately “correcting”) they will be more willing to talk. As noted above, good communication results in stronger relationships.

3) **Display affection.** Even though teenagers are in the process of becoming adults and separating from their parents, they still need the affection of their fathers. In fact, sexual promiscuity in teenage girls can often be traced back to a desire for (and lack of) affection from their fathers. Dads, be sure to offer your kids genuine affection through loving words, affirmation, encouragement, small gifts and appropriate touch. (For ideas on physical affection, download our free tip sheet, [\*“Keeping in Touch with Your Kids”\*](#).)

4) **Play.** Play is necessary for a close-knit family. There is nothing like play to bring about family togetherness and communication. Play builds family memories, reduces

family stress and produces support and affirmation. Dads, understand that play doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as taking your child out to get an ice cream cone or throwing a Frisbee around in the yard.

5) **Be there for your kids.** One of the most valuable contributions you can make today in effort to reconnect with your kids is to simply “be there;” involved in their lives. Your presence is a powerful affirmation and sign of caring towards your kids. Your presence provides kids with a greater sense of security than almost any other quality parents can offer. Sometimes, this means being willing to make some tough choices; like choosing to be your daughter's volleyball match instead of being at another business meeting. But, the value of being involved in your kids' lives is more valuable than a bigger paycheck.

6) **Do something your kids want to do.** At times, when parents want to do something together with their kids, they'll select an activity that *they* have interest in, but their kids have little or no interest in. If you really want to create a culture where your kids *want* to hang out with you, try doing things that the *kids* are interested in. While this is a simple idea, it can reap a lot of benefits!

7) **Be willing to hang out with them on their territory... but with approval.** There may be times when your teen may want to expose you to their “natural habitat;” places where they hang out. If they ask, by all means take them up on it. Consider it an honor to be asked. You never know when another opportunity like this may come along!

8) **Make your home a place where your kids and their friends want to hang out.** Strive to make your home a place where your kids and their friends want to hang out. (For more information on this, download the tip sheet from HomeWords' website: [“How To Make Your Home the Place Where Your Kids \(and Their Friends\) Want to Hang Out”](#)) When your kid's friends come over, mix it up with them; get to know them. This will help to build a comfort level with them – and it won't be seen as unusual for you to hang out with them. (Keep in mind, you can go too far here – “overstaying your welcome” – so be wise.)

9) **Never embarrass your kids in front of their friends.** Gentle teasing is one thing, but embarrassing your kids in front of their peers might be close to being an unpardonable sin in teen culture. Show respect to your kids and they'll be more willing to hang out with you.

10) **Learn a hobby together.** Find something new your son or daughter wants to learn and learn it along with them. Learning to do something new – together – is a great way to build a common bond and develop your relationship in the process.