

GOT A MINUTE? Give It To Your Kid.

Getting more involved with your preteen today will help you stay connected tomorrow. Not only that, it will help your child make better decisions – even about things like smoking, which kills one out of every three people it hooks. We know it’s not always easy. We know there’s not always time. Below are ten tips to help parents stay involved in their child’s life and help their child make healthy choices.

1. Schedule Time for you and your child. Plan for it. Write an appointment with your child on your calendar. Most importantly: Hold yourself to it. Even scheduling a short time – say, 10 minutes – can show your child he or she is important.

2. Catch your child doing something right. We often focus on the bad things our kids do. “Catching” your child doing something right, then complimenting the behavior, can encourage good behavior and keep the communication lines open. This can be as easy as saying, “Hey, your room looks great.”

3. Prove you are listening: Ask questions. Pretending to listen is easy. Really listening is tougher. You have to pay attention and ask follow-up questions. If you rarely listen to your child when he or she wants to talk, your child will be less likely to open up when you really want to connect.

4. Post a family calendar. A good way to keep your family connected is to write everything down such as soccer practice, hair appointments, work schedules, and family outings. This way you can better monitor your child’s plans as he or she gets older and more independent. In the meantime, your child will feel more connected simply by knowing where you are.

5. Create rules, and then enforce them. Rules are the boundaries that every kid needs. Say *yes* when you can, but make *no* stick. Only the rules you enforce will matter. Don’t set rules you do not intend to enforce. That will only create confusion.

6. Regularly share a meal with your preteen. Teens who report eating meals with their family are less likely to smoke or use drugs. Even if you cannot always eat with your kids, maybe you can find a few days a week when you can. It will encourage each of you to catch up with the other. One other suggestion: Forget the television – it inhibits conversation.

7. Share your day. Every parent has heard it. “How’s your day?” the parents asks. “Fine,” the child responds. Then silence. One way to help your child open up is to first share a brief story about your day, especially something positive, light-hearted, or humorous.

8. Write your child a thank-you note. Some preteens say one of the reasons they know their parents care is because they get thank-you notes left at the dinner table, stuck in a book, or slipped under a pillow. You don’t need to thank your child for anything really big. It can be for setting the table, helping a friend, or saying something nice.

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9. Ask your child for advice. Sure, you may not consult your child about approaching your boss or refinancing your home. But there are lots of smaller issues where your child will appreciate being asked for input. What to wear to a school event or where to position the television are two examples. It shows you value their opinion, especially if you occasionally act on their advice.

10. Give your preteen family responsibilities. Assign your preteen a chore that helps the whole family – like organizing your home recycling efforts or caring for the dog. By giving your child responsibilities you are letting your child know you trust his or her competence and are allowing them to feel more “adult” – the same benefit cigarettes falsely offer teens.



GOT A MINUTE? Give it to Your Kid is sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One of their goals is to protect future generations against the ravages of tobacco-related disease. Most parents don't expect their child to smoke. But youth are exposed to millions of misleading images glamorizing tobacco. That's one reason one out of eight middle school students use tobacco. Every day, 6,000 youth try cigarettes for the first time – and one out of three smokers will die from addiction.

Parents are key! Effective parenting can mean prevention. Research shows that preteens who report they regularly eat meals, follow a family calendar, and discuss free-time activities with their parents are less likely to smoke -- and are more likely to live longer, healthier lives.

GOT A MINUTE? Give it to Your Kid offers parents some ideas on how to stay connected with their children and provides suggestions for helping pre-teens and teens quit smoking. You can find out more about ***GOT A MINUTE? Give it to Your Kid***, by calling the Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-311-3435 or visiting their web site at www.cdc.org.

For more information about tobacco prevention, tobacco-related disease, and smoking cessation please contact the following resources:

- American Lung Association, 1-800-LUNGUSA or www.lungusa.org
- The American Lung Association of Michigan, 1-800-543-5864
- Michigan Resource Center, 1-800-968-4968
- For a free guide on raising tobacco-free kids call, 1-800-537-5666. Ask for *Talk it Out: A Parent's Guide to Kids and Smoking*.