



Family Matters

Making Family Life Easier

Passport to Planet Teen

If women are from Venus and men are from Mars, then what planet are teenagers from, I often hear parents ask.

As your child becomes a teenager it can seem like they are from a different planet; a far away place where they speak a different language and have their own culture and customs; a place that can be difficult for parents to gain entry into.

Planet Teen

Part of becoming an adult is about being able to become independent from parents. Teenagers must separate from their family, and move towards their peer group if they are to learn how to become stand-alone adults.

It is for this reason that teenagers temporarily relocate to planet teen, a place that is made up of different social groups, friendships and role-models. A place where teenagers receive messages from their peers and role-models on how to look, what to think and how to behave. A place where they learn how to relate and communicate as adults; and by testing out different identities with their peers, develop a sense of who they are.

Accessing Planet Teen

Parents will often say that what they would most like is to have a passport that would admit them into this foreign place, so that they can learn more about the practices of this planet and gain a better understanding of the rules and rituals.

However this is no easy feat. Although you just want to pay planet teen a quick visit and talk to your teenager about their life, it is not that simple. Being from two different planets it can sometimes feel like you and your teenager are speaking totally different languages. Many attempts at finding out what's going on in their life can often be met with sighs, eye rolls or one word answers.

So what can help you get your passport stamped and gain entry into planet teen?

Many parents consider reading their teenagers texts and emails, hoping to find even a scrap of information that might give them some sort of clue as to what is going on in their world. However I suggest, initially, observing your teenager. Look, for example, at what they wear, their hairstyle, the music they listen to, programmes they watch, grades in school, clubs they belong to. All of these hold a wealth of information about your teenager, about the group they belong to, what's important to them, what they are interested in and so on. Knowing these things about your teenager can make it much easier to have conversations with them. Instead of feeling like you are pulling teeth, it can open up the lines of communication with them, leading to more meaningful conversations in the future.

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