



# Family Matters

*Making Family Life Easier*

## Spending time with your Teenager

Believe it or not, your teenager does want to spend time with you. Not every day and not as best friends, but they wouldn't say no to a light conversation over a lunchtime snack or a trip to the shopping centre.

Teenagers can appear like they cannot be bothered by you and that they can take or leave you at times. This is true. However despite this they do enjoy having you close and involved just in a less obvious way than when they were children.

You may often wonder just how involved you can be in your teenager's life and there is no easy answer to this. However what you will find is that your teenager will notice if you stop trying to be involved!

So how can you get the balance, what is the fine line between being involved in their lives and enjoying time with them without being overinvolved and pushing them away?

Below are some suggestions that can offer you a way of spending time with your teenager that is enjoyable for both you and them.

***Make a date with your teenager*** Teenagers hate not seeing their friends regularly and often refuse to be involved in weekly family time. Once every couple of weeks arrange to go out somewhere with your teenager, maybe for lunch or to the cinema for example. This will give you consistent 1:1 time with them and they will not have to miss out on time with their friends.

***Activities they enjoy*** If you share a common interest with them, such as art or sports, then this is a great way to spend time with your teenager. If not, engaging in activities that they enjoy can also help you connect with them.

***Car Time*** Think about how much time you spend driving them places; to school or activities or to their friend's house. Make use of this time in the car, not to lecture or interrogate your teenager but to have casual conversations with them about what is going on in their world.

***Seize the Moment*** You may look out your kitchen window and see your teenager kicking a ball against the wall or you notice them watching a show on T.V. Use these times to connect with them. The housework can wait and the world won't end if dinner is 5 minutes late!

Sometimes you will have to be creative about how to spend time with your teenager, but it is worth putting thought into things that would appeal to them. What is important is that you continue to offer them opportunities to spend time with you, even if you think they are not interested; they still need you in their lives.

*Clare Crowley Collier, Therapist, Educator & Facilitator for Teenagers and Parents*