

## The Stage of Intimacy--12 to 18 years

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March 20, 2023



**Coach Myrna March 20, 2023**

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## The Stage of Intimacy--12-18 years

The behavior of adolescents is often puzzling and upsetting for parents; they can be moody and uncommunicative. As parents and grandparents, we need to make peace with the reality that we cannot control our teenagers. We can, however, influence them and if our connection is strong, connecting and communication does happen. Adolescents have a difficult time to accept most things without questioning. It is the age of reasoning and thinking for themselves and we need to learn to not take it personally. It is an opportunity to have discussions, ask questions, listen to their answers and offer our own experiences and opinions in a respectful manner.

The years from age 12 to 18 are the final passage before adulthood. During this stage, teenagers go through puberty with all of its rollercoaster of emotions, experience new levels of attraction to the opposite sex which can be both exciting and confusing, and are still discovering their ever-evolving identity. They are learning how to share their thoughts and desires in a deeper way and developing the foundation for a future intimate relationship with a committed partner.

Nurturing the capacity for emotional intimacy is a family matter. Children learn to share their thoughts and feelings by doing it in their family and seeing it modeled for them by loving parents. Learning to trust and be trusted involves safety. It is important that the family culture creates a feeling of safety

and that parents are aware of and address belittling, putdowns and other negative forms of sibling interaction. Use family meetings to work on ways of connecting and communicating:

[www.coachmyrna.org/blog/the-power-of-weekly-family-time](http://www.coachmyrna.org/blog/the-power-of-weekly-family-time)

If the connection is strong with their parents, adolescence can be a rewarding time for the family. A teenager is able of caring about the interests and concerns of their parents, siblings and others as well as having meaningful conversations about what is happening in the world around them and their ideas about their future.

### **What they need from parents and grandparents:**

- Family matters—nurture the capacity for emotional connection and intimacy and pay attention. Your relationship with your teenager is the best way to communicate your values. It is very possible to have authentic and honest communication. Model what you want them to inherit.
- Children learn to share thoughts and feelings by seeing others do so—our modeling of this skill is important. Sharing deep thoughts and feelings together is preparation for future relationships, spouse, and close friends. If this is something that is difficult for you, admit it and look for opportunities to work on your listening and communication skills. Consider signing up for a Safe Conversations workshop:
  - [www.coachmyrna.org/create-connection-in-relationships.html](http://www.coachmyrna.org/create-connection-in-relationships.html)
- Teens are very perceptive, observant and dislike hypocrisy. It is important that home is a space where they can express their views and opinions and learn to respectfully disagree with each other.
- Conversations that provide information on choices, sex, negotiate rules and limits. They need to hear that they can say “No” to friends and situations that make them uncomfortable. Consciously helping a child to learn to say no is helping them develop respect for themselves and their inner integrity.
- They need parents who pay attention and ask questions/step in to provide safety. The paradox is that the teenager wants freedom but needs structure and guidance. If the parents aren't providing it, they sometimes do things that get them into trouble and ignore rules in order to get their parents to pay attention.
- Teenagers need to see that their parents are continuing to learn and

grow. The best environment is one in which the parents are working on their relationship with each other.

A tool that my husband and I learned many years ago through a course entitled, "Growing Kids God's Way" is called Couch Time. Illustrated in the image below, it simply involves showing that your relationship is a priority, ideally in the presence of your kids. This isn't a time to talk about what they did wrong that day, when to get the car serviced or what to do this weekend. It is about being present and demonstrating your care and support for each other.

***Research shows that children's greatest sense of security comes when they are secure in the knowledge that their parents respect and love each other.***

**Couch Time**

- You and your spouse sit down and talk in the presence of your children
- Focus on your connection with each other
- Model making your relationship a priority
- Start small-just 3 to 5 minutes, 1 or 2 times a week



To purchase my book on  
Amazon: [www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09L7KS5VH](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09L7KS5VH)

*If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: [www.coachmyrna.org/](http://www.coachmyrna.org/) Find out more about Safe Conversations [www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html](http://www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html).*

