

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for October 23, 2023
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about talking with teens, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

One thing that I find challenging as a parent is trying not to assume I know how my teens feel. I can quickly surmise a situation, think about how I would feel if it were me instead of them, and then conclude that must be the way my teen feels as well. And boy am I usually wrong.

Another struggle I have is giving my unsolicited opinion. When they were young children and tweens, I was teaching my kids all the time. And sometimes, as I remember it, they even agreed with me. But now, well that has changed as well.

The other day I was conversing with my 14-year-old daughter. She told me that she would share more with me if she knew I wouldn't give her my opinion about it. I appreciated her honesty. I told her about an activity we do in the parenting classes we teach for teens in the Juvenile Court Diversion program. I give the teens a few "Problem Passes."

These were developed by the Strengthening Families Program. Each pass says, "I have a problem that, if you knew about, you might get angry or upset. So even though I'm still responsible for my actions, by accepting this PASS you agree to listen and help me problem-solve without saying "I told you so," "I can't believe you did that," or getting angry."

Many times, that is what our teens need from us the most. To listen to them like an adult. To listen with curiosity and compassion rather than judgement and fear. I told my daughter that I would make her some passes that say I promise to listen without sharing my opinion with her.

At this point in their lives, teens are constantly evaluating. They are weighing everything we've shown and told them until now. They are comparing it to what others are showing them and telling them. Sometimes we act like we do as parents because we want to prevent them from experiencing failure. We've been there, done that. We've learned. But our teens need to learn to fail well.

That means we give them guard rails. We stand firm on the non-negotiables outside of the guard rails. Following the law. Obeying family rules like curfew or a set number of household chores.

And then we let them live life between the guard rails. They are going to make some decisions that we wouldn't make. But when these decisions are within the guard rails, we need to learn to be ok with that. Even if it isn't what we would consider as wise. Wisdom takes time and often some experience.

Here is more advice from the Strengthening Families Program about talking with our teens.

1. Ask open-ended questions, often and casually. These can be about things they are interested in: music, sports, celebrities, friends, movies; who they sat with at lunch; what they think about current events, etc.
2. Respect their right to have a different point of view, even if you disagree. Not every conversation should be a debate.
3. Encourage teens to tell you about problems they may be having and assure them that you'll try to understand and won't judge or reprimand.
4. Don't offer solutions unless they ask for advice. Instead, listen, and ask what options they are considering. Say, "If you would like to explore any of my thoughts on the subject, let me know."
5. Ask about school and friends. Offer to assist or get them help if needed in hard classes. Find out which friends help kids be their best selves. Encourage and support good friendships.

And now let's look at what's new from OSU Extension.

Next time you are wondering about the best way to do something or what the latest research-based practices are, be sure to check out Ohioline by OSU Extension. Simply visit Ohioline.osu.edu and type in your topic of interest. This could be anything from elderberry production in Ohio to Healthy cooking for one or two. Or Preserving Pie Fillings or managing yellow jackets. Or selecting and storing Ohio winter squash and pumpkin or the best time to prune trees and shrubs. Be sure to check out Ohioline for these topics and hundreds of others.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!