

# WHAT YOUR TEEN IS MISSING....

A parent's guide to more connecting conversations with their teens.



**Built in partnership with Geoff McLachlan  
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## **Welcome to *What Your Teen is Missing...***

Most parents of teens have experienced the worry, pain, and anxiety that happens when they cannot connect with their teen. This guide is designed to provide support and practical strategies to help parents overcome the challenges they face when trying to connect and create deeper connections with their friends, family, colleagues, or community members.

Whether you're seeking better understanding, just trying to get your kid to talk, or working on your relationship with your child, this guide aims to empower you with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the path towards meaningful connections.



# WHAT YOUR TEEN IS MISSING....

A guide to fostering connections for parents with teens.

## THE PROBLEM STRUGGLING TO CONNECT.

Every parent knows how hard it can be to connect with their teenager. Sometimes it feels like talking to a brick wall, or that we're missing the mark completely. This leads to frustration, anxiety, and fear for our relationship with our children and their wellbeing.

The challenge is that teens are still developing their brains and have a hard time with many tasks, let alone navigating relationships, school work, teams, peers, social media, and family.

As parents or caretakers, we can help teens realize their value, increase their resilience, and help them find a positive outlook on life, *through learning to have conversations that actually lead to connection.*

As adults we can help them feel more connected and safe by asking questions and being genuinely interested in their response. By fully engaging in their story, we become more connected and offer a place of comfort in a crazy world.

### Navigating the Challenges

This guide acknowledges the raw, lost, and confused emotions that often accompany the desire for connection. It understands the aftermath of attempts at socializing, which can lead to social anxiety, oversharing, or even a fear of abandonment. Recognizing that the brain processes social pain in the same way it does physical pain, we strive to provide you with practical tools and strategies to ease this process.

# THE JOURNEY TOWARDS CONNECTION

**While the journey towards building meaningful connections may seem overwhelming, remember that it is possible, and you are not alone. Parents and teens alike can feel disconnected at times.**

Our Connection-Based-Conversation methodology may seem counterintuitive, because you're having a conversation designed to benefit you both. Asking your teen questions and seeking their story can help you gain insight into yourself. And when your teen feels like you are genuinely interested in them, they will feel more open to share.

## Creating comfort in the discomfort.

### SAFETY

This practice requires vulnerability and trust, it is everyone's responsibility to be respectful of one another. There is no judgement in this space.

### GENUINE CURIOSITY

Take the time to truly listen to the response before forming your next question. As the respondee, take the time to really consider your response.

### EMBRACE THE SILENCE

While silence may be uncomfortable, that means the other individual is exploring areas they haven't thought of before. Give them the space to process!

### PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

At the start, explicitly offer that they should speak up if they are ever uncomfortable with a question.

# FINDING GOOD CONVERSATION PROCESS



## 1 Create safety for you and your teen.

- Offer boundaries, they can choose not to respond if a question makes them uncomfortable.
- Give yourself permission to mess up.
- Remember that you may be asking them else to be vulnerable and to give them the space to say 'no, thank you.'
- No SOFA\* – while tempting, it can create a disconnected environment.

\*definition on page 4

## 2 Identify the type of story that interests you.

Identify what kind of story you are genuinely interested in hearing or what you'd like to learn from them.

Examples include:

- How they overcame a struggle.
- Identifying feelings.
- Finding purpose.
- Influencing others.
- Self-acceptance.

## 4 Check your assumptions.

We all have different definitions and interpretations for words and feelings. Ask for more details on what a descriptive word (ex: exciting, great, meaningful, etc.) means to them.

## 3 Follow up to get more details.

Once you ask your initial question, follow up with more questions about their experience, how they did it, what they felt, etc. Remember, you're trying to learn their story so ask for the deeper details!

# EXAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

## FINDING GOOD

Below you'll find example questions you can ask to find your teen's story.

\*We offer a few examples of follow up questions as suggestions, if you have another question based in **genuine curiosity** of their story - please ask it!

**1**

Question — [ What is the best thing that happened this week?

\*Possible Follow up Questions — [ 1.How did you feel after it happened?  
2.What part did you play in making it happen?  
3.How can you use those lessons and skills going forward?

**2**

Question — [ When did you feel the most successful this week?

\*Possible Follow up Questions — [ 1.How did you feel before and after?  
2.What was your part in that success?  
3.How has that helped you?

**3**

Question — [ What are you the most proud of doing in the last week?

\*Possible Follow up Questions — [ 1.What about it makes you proud?  
2.How did you get there?  
3.How did it feel?

**4**

Question — [ When were you the most interested this week?

\*Possible Follow up Questions — [ 1.What did that feel like for you to be engaged?  
2.What was the process you went through?  
3.How did that impact you going forward?

REMEMBER

# NO SOFA

Avoid judgement, remain curious, & no SOFA

**5**

Question — [ How have you positively impacted someone else recently?

\*Possible Follow up Questions — [ 1.What was the impact on the other person?  
2.How did it feel to have that impact?  
3.Why did you do it?

# WHAT TO EXPECT

Connecting with others is a fundamental human need, and it is within your reach. By embarking on this journey and utilizing the tools and insights provided in this guide, you will enhance your ability to connect with others, overcome challenges, and cultivate fulfilling relationships. Remember, it takes time, effort, and patience, but the rewards of genuine human connection are immeasurable.

Let's embark on this transformative journey together by fostering connections that bring joy, support, and fulfillment to your life.

## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Share this guide with those you care about and who care about you. Being a parent of a teen is challenging and also rewarding when we connect. Give yourself and your teen grace as you travel on this journey of deeper connection.

Try it on and have honest conversations about it.

# THANK YOU

For Finding Good with these conversations, and for helping the organizations doing good through your investment.

We Thank You from the bottom of our hearts.

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