



5 THINGS TEENS WANT FROM THEIR PARENTS

But Don't Know How To Ask For

CREATED BY JOSHUA RODRIGUEZ



Teenagers can be incredibly hard to understand, especially when they don't verbalize what they want or how they feel.

I can imagine how frustrating it must be. I know because I hear from teenagers all the time. The last thing they want to do is talk to their parents about what's going on in their lives because they feel you're the last person in the world that can understand them.

My name is Joshua Rodriguez and I'm a motivational speaker that teaches the values of compassion, mindfulness, and confidence for middle school and high school teens looking for advice in different areas of their life: self-worth, relationships, academics, and family.

My goal is to help your teen learn how to be their best self.

I hope this guide can help you better understand the needs of your teenager, and hopefully how to better communicate what you want from them. It's going to require work on everyone's end, so I hope you're up for the challenge.

As their parent, I know you already have exactly what you need to be somebody great.

As always, love & peace.

Joshua Rodriguez

I'm writing this guide with the intent to share five life changing attitudes that will not only improve the relationship between you and your teen, but will also help them develop their own sense of being in this world as an individual.

I want you to take a moment to think about these next few questions. Try to imagine what the answer would be if you had to answer them, and then ask yourself if your teen had to answer them for you, would you feel satisfied with the answer they would give? The first question is simply this:

Do you feel like your teen has a good handle on their emotions in their current stage of life?

What I don't mean is "do they have bad days?" or "are they ever sad or angry or want nothing to do with anyone?". We ALL have moments like that, but drama aside, when we talk about the day-to-day casual moments of life, do you feel like your teen has all the skills they need to carry themselves in a way that you feel confident about?

Now I want you to take a moment to think, if your teen had to answer that question for you, would you still feel confident in their answer? There might be an overwhelming YES running through your mind, but for most parents there's a hint of doubt, a disconnect from having a full reading on your teen. Maybe it's the lack of sharing details about their lives or the short, flustered tempers they may have when things don't go their way. Regardless, what I want to share with you are the things I've learned from talking to teens myself. The things they've communicated (without directly asking for it) to me that they can only hope to learn from their parents.

I want to start off by saying I'm no expert in child psychology or therapy or even grade school teaching. I have been making YouTube videos and most recently a published self help guide for teens giving small, reachable steps that teens and young adults can take to be their best selves. I consider myself an inspirational speaker who is trying to instill these values in students because I see the importance of them.

They are values that I aspire to grow myself, and hopefully after reading this, you'll see why it's so important to demonstrate them in front of your children. Not just for their learning and development, but for your own character and well being too.

The best thing you can do after reading this guide is to reflect on each point, discuss it with your teen and see if you can start an open, honest and inspiring conversation with them. At first they may be hesitant, but as time goes on they'll feel more comfortable sharing their feelings with you and knowing that you are someone that will keep them safe and are someone in their life that they can trust.

I know you have what it takes to be somebody great, and together we can figure out what that looks like for you.

WANT #1

I want to see my parent/s
communicate with
compassion and empathy.

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For many children, the first relationships they watch unfold are the types their parents have with each other or with those close to them. Anything observable can have an impact on their lives because most experiences are quite new to them. Seeing a parent sit down and relax after a long day of work or watching a parent hit a door in anger at their spouse can set an example for a child that these types of behaviors are normal responses to the situation they are seeing unfold.

The same goes for how parents communicate with others. Watching how dialogue unfolds, who starts a conversation with whom or even when conversations or feelings are not shared can have a powerful impact on how your child chooses to respond back to you. In the adolescent years, children are coming into lots of new feelings and thoughts.

With their bodies developing, their friends crafting their own identities and responsibilities being laid at their feet, teens are always in the process of trying to figure out how to best interpret the situation they are in and then respond to it in a way that feels right to them. Over the years I've seen how much teenagers long for better, kinder and compassionate conversations with their parents.

I'll often get asked questions like:

"how do I talk to my parents about giving me my own room?"

or

"how do I convince my parents to let me start dating someone?"

My answer to this is usually to come from a place of understanding, to recognize that each parent or parenting team have their own wants and needs within a family dynamic.

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No matter what I say or tell them they should do, the parents rules in the household come first and they have final say in the decision.

Teens are not always happy with that answer because in many cases, what they are looking for is a way to avoid their deeper conversations with their parents. They want a quick fix, a way to get you to say yes so they can go on and do whatever it is they hope to do. Other times, teenagers fully embrace what I have to say and are willing to sit down with their parents to talk things out, no matter what their final decision may be.

What I'm sure all of us can agree on; you, me and your teenager is that knowing what everyone is comfortable with and not comfortable with should be laid there on the table. How do you get to that point though? How do you create a setting where your teen can come to you with their issues and struggles?

A major piece to it is to demonstrate for them what **positive communication** can look like. You can start by thinking about the way you talk to others in front of them.

- *How do you speak to or demonstrate respect for your parents or other relatives?*
- *How do you respond to someone disagreeing with you or simply getting under your skin?*
- *How do you speak about people who don't meet your expectations?*

In all of these situations, children are paying attention. That's why it's crucial to focus on what you do and how you speak in front of them. If your child sees you show a lack of care for your own relatives, they may start to feel like healthy family relationships crumble over time.

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If your child sees you flip off the handle when someone cuts you off in traffic or a person makes an offensive comment towards you, your child may feel like those types of responses are normal ones to have in those situations.

Also, if your child sees disappointment in your eyes or on your face whenever someone doesn't meet the expectation you have set out for them, they may start to feel like they also fall short of being accepted by you.

I don't want you to feel like you're a bad parent at all if you don't always have a proper response to situations. Knowing how to respond properly is part of the next step we'll talk about, but for now being mindful of our own behaviors and working on improving them whenever we feel capable too is the best step we can take.

So when it comes to what your child wants to see from you, it's as simple as this:
be the type of role model that they can be proud of.

If your child can see that you're open to dialogue, to sharing your concerns and disagreements with others in a way that's driven by peace and a will to understand, they will also feel like that behavior can be extended to them. Lots of teens live in fear of their parents, not because they think you'll do something to hurt them, but that they won't be given the chance to share their own feelings when something happens. That their voice won't exist and that the rules have consequences, without any room for understanding or forgiveness.

That's why it's essential for children to live in an environment where feelings are mentionable and manageable. If they see their parents assessing situations from a place of calm understanding, they'll know that the environment they live in is safe for them to share their successes and failures. As they get older, they too will approach situations like this and feel like compassion is and has always been an essential part of communication.

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WANT #2

I want to see my parent/s be vulnerable when times are tough.

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Hiding your feelings might be something that comes natural to you. Often at times, when your children are present you may want to hide your own hardships from them to protect them from feelings of sadness, hurt, guilt or helplessness. Protecting your children is a high priority for you, but shielding them from seeing you express human emotions might make it harder for them to express their own emotions in front of you.

Let's say for example you lose your job or you take a pay cut at work. This can have a devastating effect on your own mental health and well being, but it can also make you feel ashamed to share with your family. With less security and income, you might feel like you're failing as a parent and not doing all that you should be doing to take care of your family.

Because of that it might make all the sense in the world to pretend like you have it all under control, that this bump in the road isn't making you feel down, or worried or even nervous about what's to come. When our children see us hiding our vulnerability, it can create an unrealistic standard for them, one that they feel they can never meet. They might measure themselves up to the perception of you, the you that is stoic, unmoved and unfazed by anything that happens.

They may feel inadequate or even wrong for having emotions when they have their own hardships to deal with.

That's why it's crucial for parents to talk to their kids about their feelings. Teens needs to know that adults have feelings too and just like them, they need to work together with others to help resolve the conflicts in their life.

To go back to the example of losing your job, having that discussion with your teen might make them worried or scared that things will change in the household. They're going to look to you for leadership, and you can be

vulnerable in those uncertain moments, they'll also realize that not everyone has it all figured out. We are all on our own journey of self discovery. It doesn't matter if you're a teen or a parent, having feelings is always something you can talk about.

If teens could only see this from their parents more often, they would know that how they feel is normal and that when they want to be open and vulnerable, their parents are people they can turn to for advice.

I've spoken to lots of teens that feel like their parents just don't get it. Their parents only care about their grades, whether their room is clean and whether they did their homework. So many teens don't recognize that right there in their home are people they can turn to for help. Instead, they look online for advice, turn to friends who may be dealing with similar issues or just keep their emotions to themselves and bury them deep down.

What it all really comes down to is letting your child know that **sharing how you feel can be a safe thing to do if you share those feelings with people who care about you.**

If you want to start those conversations with your teen, first think about what's going on currently in your life. What do you feel comfortable sharing with them? What would you be ok with expressing your feelings about? Sometimes the process can be as simple as not holding yourself back from crying in front of your teen or taking time for yourself to relax.

Because even when your child simply observes you expressing yourself, it lets them know that it's ok to express themselves too.

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STORY

When Fred Rogers from Mister Rogers Neighborhood was a young boy, he saw his father cry in front of him when his grandfather passed away. In that moment alone, he learned that it was ok for men to cry, for men to share how they feel and for men to express that in front of others.

Then, when the time came where Mister Rogers' father passed away, he knew it was ok to cry in front of his children too. To show them that the moment was a sad one and he wasn't scared to show his feelings of sadness.

It's important for your children to see that you're strong. That you have what it takes to navigate the world bravely. But bravery goes hand in hand with honesty. And it's when you're honest that your children can trust your bravery, that when you do step up you're doing it because you truly believe in yourself.

Remember, you don't have to be a super parent. You just need to be human, with all of your flaws, your strengths and your feelings.

WANT #3

I want to see my parent/s be trusting of others and support me in making my own decisions.

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Life is always full of problems, sometimes so stressful and difficult that the answer for how to resolve them isn't always so clear. In a family unit, the parents are the people in charge of figuring out how each person plays a role in resolving the issue and creating a safe and loving environment where everyone feels protected.

Simple task, right?

As your teen makes their way through the world, they're going to have to work with others to resolve their issues, spend time thinking critically for themselves how to make situations work out for them positively and know when to be a leader if the situation calls for it. It just so happens, these are all observable skills that they will model after your own ability to do it, your ability to be a team player and a leader when the times for it.

What you should be on the lookout for is how you interact with people outside of your family unit, do you approach strangers with curiosity and warmth or with skepticism and mistrust? Does your teen see you refuse to ask for help or step aside if someone else is more knowledgeable in that situation? Teamwork is best taught when it's acted out in front of your teens. If they can see you assign responsibility in a way that's achievable, it will help them how to pick the right friends, romantic partners and even strengthen their trust in their family.

With friends, your teens are going to align themselves with the kids they connect with best, either kids with similar life circumstances as them or people who are open to understanding them. In some cases, your teen may pick a group of people or a friend that doesn't have the best direction or path laid out, someone that might lead your kid astray from being their best self. As a parent, I'm sure one of the scariest feelings is to know that your child isn't living up to their potential.

But, not only do they discover what that potential is first within the household,

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they most likely will model it after what they see their parents do. For example, if your teen sees you talking negatively about friends or family members, criticizing them and being judgmental, they may be afraid to bring their own friends around for fear of the same treatment by you. Kids want their friends to be accepted by their parents almost as much as they do. Their friends are an extension of who they are and how they demonstrate their identity.

Which means if they don't see you as someone who is welcoming of others from the start, it might cause a disconnect with you and them. The same can be said for teens and their romantic partners. If they have already begun investing feelings into someone they care about, having your parents reject them might lead them to lash out, to hide their relationship and to defend that person, regardless if they have good or bad intentions with your teen.

So what can you do if your teenager is mixing with the wrong people? How do you pull them away with stepping on their autonomy and decision making abilities? I think the answer lies in learning more and showcasing an interest in how they feel in what they think. Asking non-probing questions can be the start of it, you can say things like:

- *You two seem like you really have a lot of fun together. How did the two of you meet anyway?*
- *They seem like a really good kid. Are they close with their family?*
- *I'm really happy seeing you surround yourself with people that make you feel cared for. Would you say these are friends who really have your back?*

Your teen may not want to answer all of these or let you in on too many of the details, but it's important to show them that you care and that you're opening

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the space for them to share what's on their mind in case something happens.

And for those times where your kid makes a wrong call, or does something that ends up hurting them, the last thing they want to hear is the dreaded "I told you so". Not only does that phrase make them feel like you know their life better than them but that they are also not capable of working through their own issues as they come. That they should always take your advice and that you always know best.

In reality, even though you might have lived through some of the same situations that they are experiencing, you are look at it with hindsight rather than in the now. These may be first moments for your teen, things they've never encountered or handled before. If you swoop in every single time to save the day, they may feel powerless in controlling their own fate.

Now that doesn't mean let your kids roam free, make bad decisions and then not sharing any advice if they come crying to you when it doesn't work out. What I mean is to be hand's off but an arms length away. Don't control their decisions, in fact, reward them when they make a call for themselves. Show them that you want to know how they decided what makes sense and spend that time deeply listening to them.

If you take the time to deeply listen, you will be surprised by what your teen is willing to share. When a trusting parent is open and curious, it's a whole different experience for that teenager.

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WANT #4

I want to see my parent/s having fun and challenging themselves to learn new ideas.

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Learning to love what you do in front of your children can be the best teaching experience you can offer them. Being able to see you appreciate your job, give your all to the work you dedicate your time to and being able to speak about the meaning it brings you in your life is something your child will find inspirational. It will help them get a much clearer sense of what it means to find meaning and purpose in your life.

Now for many people, your job may not be something you enjoy but is instead something you have to do to help provide for your family. Not everyone is in the place that they want to be, but it's so crucial for your teen to know that the option is always a reality that exists, even if it's not something that's immediately attainable.

For your teen, they're entering that stage of life where they're already thinking about what their placement is going to be in this world. Where can they apply themselves, where can they provide value or even just where can they make the most money. The first place they'll look to for examples is their family because seeing their family operate gives them an inside look into what stress management is, how it balances with family life and how fulfilling work in your job field can be. There are plenty of teens that don't want to come near anything related to what their parents are doing, and that's ok. As individuals, it's a decision they will come to make on their own.

But it isn't so much what you choose to do, but how you choose to love what you do. How you demonstrate the care and consideration for how you spend your time. For some parents they demonstrate this with the love of a car, or a home garden or even a family pet. Showing your teen how to take care of something can be a rewarding experience for them. It helps them learn to discover the things in their own life that they can appreciate, take care of and demonstrate their highest value for.

The reason why I think the role of the parent is so important here is because

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while they may learn to value the same materials things as their friends, they too are in the stage of learning and are often mimicking what they see others do. And this creativity is often something that should be encouraged (within reason), your teen wants to know that they can venture out into the world just like you have and make something of themselves.

Parents sometimes carry themselves very different from how they set restrictions for their teens. It may come from being cautious or not wanting your child to deal with the type of hardships you did as a teen, but what they want most from you is to know that you support their creativity. One way to do that is to be creative yourself, to have your own set of hobbies or interests that can inspire them. Teens may not always express their curiosity for what you do but it definitely will serve them well to know that even an adult you can always learn new things and find new ways to express yourself.

Think back to when you were a teen and you saw people who were older than you:

- *Did you see them as one dimensional?*
- *When you thought about your teacher, did you ever think all they did was school related stuff?*
- *What about your mailman or someone who worked in your grocery store?*

It's easy to feel like our identity is shaped only by what we're known for, but every one of us has multiple layers to our personality.

Being able to demonstrate your multifaceted lifestyle eliminates the dreadful thought that there's only one set path to follow, something a lot of teens can fall into thinking if they don't see opportunities ahead for them. This can sometimes

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be reinforced by school, if a student doesn't get the best grades or have a clear passion for what they're learning, they can start to feel like there isn't any hope for them.

That their only option is to take the first job that will accept them, that any meaningful experience they can draw from life will have to be put on hold until they have it all figured out. Little do they realize that parents too are flawed and they also change their mind about things.

How often do you talk openly with your teen about your hopes and dreams? About your five year plan? About your ten year plan? Or just simply about what makes you really happy about life?

These aren't conversations we generally have because we just feel like our kids are just too focused on what they have to deal with. And while a major part of that may be true, just simply observing their parent love their dreams into being can be incredibly rewarding and provide an immense level of security for them.

Seeing you be yourself can help them realize that the option to be themselves is available to them too.

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WANT #5

I want them to love me for who I am deep down inside, not because of what I do or accomplish.

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One thing all people have in common, whether you're a teen or a parent is the desire to be loved for who you are and to know that you can love others in return. It's the fuel that connects us all as humans, and in a family dynamic, it's the most important piece to a loving and caring parent-child relationship.

Learning how to love someone can be one of the most difficult challenges to face though, especially when your child pushes your buttons without any regard for how much stress they are putting on your table. Sometimes teens are so hyper-focused on their own needs and wants that they act without regard for their parent, often ignoring how their actions make them feel.

You have a tough job on your hands, and for that I truly respect you for it.

There's an expectation set that no matter what your child does, you're supposed to always be there for them, to help them through their mistakes and to help them navigate perfectly throughout life. Even in this guide you may have felt like there were expectations set for you, rules that you should follow to be the "perfect parent" that your child needs.

The truth is, there is no perfect parent. There are only parents who are doing their best to love their children for who they are.

And sometimes that's exactly what your teen needs to hear. They don't need you to pretend with them, they need your honesty. They need your openness. They need to see that you can be vulnerable and direct with them. It's the only way they're going to learn how to do it themselves.

Sometimes the term unconditional love is used to describe a parent-child relationship. The idea of loving someone for all that they are, the good and the bad, the happy moments along with the sad ones. Maybe in a perfect world you

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can always unconditionally love your child, but in reality that's not always the case.

There are times where you won't accept their behavior, times where they will annoy you or make you so mad that you do want to yell at them and scream and ground them and punish them just so they can stop doing whatever it is they're doing. Those feelings you're experiencing are normal, they're just as much a part of you as the feelings of true care for your child, the moments where you want to hug them, talk highly of them or even tell them that you love them.

It's important to think about the good and the bad feelings. Because all of those feelings are exactly that, just feelings. What matters most is what we do with our feelings, how we express ourselves and how we take responsibility for the expressions we share with others. For example, when you get mad at your child for breaking the rules, think about what you're feeling and try to find a way to communicate that directly with them.

Instead of saying something like "How could you do that? What were you thinking? I taught you better than this!", you may want to let them know "What you did really hurt me. It made me feel like you didn't respect what I said and I want to know how to best talk to you so that you can be open about when you disagree with the rules I set".

Letting your child know that there is always a space for forgiveness, that you accept them for who they are and are willing to talk things out with them as long as they are honest back with you is what they need to hear.

They need to know that even if they don't get things quite right, even if they are sometimes selfish or reckless or act without thinking, you care about them enough to be understanding of who they are and where they are in their life. Just simply knowing that you want to see them succeed, you want to see them learn and grow is a wonderfully uplifting force that every child needs.

At the end of the day, all your teen really wants is to know that they matter.

That their life matters.

That their thoughts matter.

That their feelings matter.

We all want to know that we matter to someone. Let that someone in their life be you.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.

I was riding on a plane back from California after a YouTube convention when I received a message from a young high school student which said:

“Hey Josh, I need your help. My parents don’t respect me. They ignore my privacy and even worse, they tell me I won’t amount to anything in life if I don’t do exactly what they say. I feel like I have no freedom. I don’t know how to ask them for help because they don’t want to help, they don’t even want to listen to me. Please help me.”

I realized that there are a lot of teenagers who struggle with connection. Whether it’s connecting with their peers or connecting with their parents, they need that extra assistance to believe in their ability to communicate their feelings without it being ignored. I wanted to write this short guide just to let parents know that just because your child may not be expressing those feelings to you, they may still feel them.

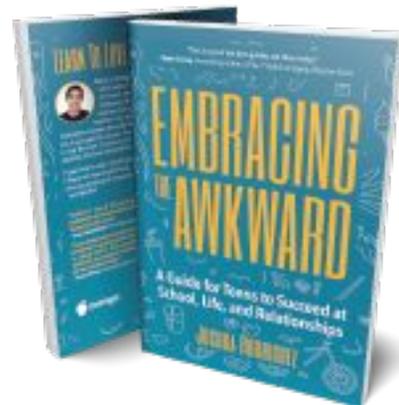
Sit down with your children. Talk to them. Guide them. Be the leaders they are looking for. But most importantly, listen to them. Although they are young and impatient, and inexperienced in life, they know one thing for sure and that’s the fact that they need your parental love and support.

HELP YOUR CHILD EMBRACE THE AWKWARD

I've also put together a book called "Embracing The Awkward: A Guide for Teens to Succeed at School, Life and Relationships". Here's a quick synopsis of the book:lf.

This down to earth guide will help teens build confidence, approach challenges with mindfulness, and embrace the awkward parts of life - and ourselves!

In this book Josh walks through the step-by-step process for sorting out the confusion around teen questions. This isn't another dry instructional book written by a boring adult who is disconnected from the millennial reality, it's a guide, a workbook, an empowering step towards trying things out, discovering who you are and truly becoming your best self.



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"Teens today have more demands on their time than many business executives. So, how does a teen live an effective life—one filled with good relationships and success in school and in their personal life? Josh's book, Embracing the Awkward, has answers to those question and many more. This is one of the best guides out there today."

Sean Covey, Best-selling author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*



About the author

Joshua Rodriguez is the older brother every teenager trying to figure out their place in this world needs. As a motivational speaker, life coach, author and YouTuber with over 20 million YouTube views, Josh has a unique voice that resonates with middle school, high school and college students looking for advice in the most difficult areas of their life: self-worth, relationships, academics, and family.

Josh has also been a guest speaker at many schools across the east coast participating in town halls, career day events, workshops and panels where he teaches the important values of compassion, mindfulness, and confidence.

Learn more at www.thejoshspeaks.com