

## ENCOURAGING YOUR TEENAGER

By Cindy M Knapp, MS, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Teenagers are in desperate need of encouragement and validation from others, especially their parents, even though it may not seem so! We often misunderstand what kind of statements a teenager will find encouraging. The biggest mistake adults often make is saying *too much*. A simple, direct statement that leaves teenagers something to ponder and validates their strengths is often the best choice. And, these kinds of statements/questions are only helpful when we express ourselves *with an attitude of genuine curiosity and confidence* that the teen is ready and capable to deal with the current life circumstance.

### EXAMPLES:

“I know you are going through a difficult time right now; I love you.”

“What do you think are the options here?”

“Sometimes I want to rescue you from your difficulties. I have confidence in your abilities and I believe that you will find the strengths I know exist in you.”

“I want you to know I see your struggle and I believe in your ability to make a choice you can live with.”

“That’s sounds challenging, what do you think is best here?”

“I can see that you are unsure how you want to react [to a specific situation]. Know that I believe in you and I’m here for you if you need me.”

“You seem to be thinking a lot about what to do. I know this decision is a hard one. I know you are capable of deciding what is best for you while also considering others.”

“What are you going to do?”

“You’ve made a choice and the consequences are unpleasant. I trust in your ability to live with these consequences and make a better choice for yourself in the future.”

“It is hard for me to see you struggling so much. I will try to be as predictable and clear with you as I can be since I’ve been put in a position to have to administer consequences to you here.”

“I care about your pain and wish I could make it all work out for you. I’m glad that you’re figuring out how to take better care of yourself.”

“I am tempted to remove the consequence from you, but I believe that would not be in your best interests. I know you can live with this and that you understand the reasons behind my decision.”

“Even when you are uncertain about how to respond, you are still [respectful, etc.] I appreciate what a [thoughtful, etc.] person you are.”

“Your friends are fortunate to have such loyalty from you. It’s good to know that you’ll take care of yourself while also trying to be the best friend that you can be.”

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