

From Your Ridgecrest Counselors

Talking with middle school teenagers can go two ways: your child will either have a lot to share or not be the most Chatty Cathy person you encountered in that conversation. Often teenagers may appear more interested in what is happening in front of them rather than communicating the details of their day, big or small. Sometimes all it takes is asking the right questions to get a conversation started with your teenager to know what is on their minds and what is happening in their lives.

As counselors, we spend much of our time talking with students, getting to know them and offering our guidance and insight when we can. We enjoy seeing the world through the eyes of our students; it's why we enjoy what we do. It does take extra effort to establish rapport and trust with students to allow them to feel comfortable and open up. Some students will happily communicate their concerns and feelings while others may be quieter. In order to have a successful conversation, consider the following types of questions:

- Open-ended/Reality question – ask your child a vague question that may elicit a broad range of responses
- Specific question – ask your child something specific to reach your goal of the conversation
- Empathetic question – ask your child's feeling about an event or experience
- Genuine question – ask your child's personal view of an event or experience
- Probing question – ask your child to elaborate in more detail on the topic you are discussing by using specific questions

We encourage families to communicate as often as possible as we believe this creates a positive and healthy environment for students. Whether you communicate at the dinner table or by checking in via text message, asking various types of questions will broaden the wealth of information your child may share with you.

With the holiday season ahead of us for those who celebrate, consider this a time to get together and share what is taking place in your lives with your family and friends.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Heidi Shulman & Jesse Allen

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