



inspire balance

coaching parents, teens & young adults

# WHAT YOUR

# TEEN NEEDS

— *but isn't* —

# ASKING



## ***Introduction***

Adolescence can be tough – on your teen and on you. As independence beckons, your teen is likely to rebel, test the boundaries, and become argumentative and distant. Add to that the powerful biological changes occurring at this stage and it's no wonder connection and communication feel impossible.

If you have been scratching your head, trying to make sense of your teen's life, or wondering how to get through to her, you've come to the right place. Stress, frustration, and struggle do not need to be part of your parenting journey. You don't have to brace yourself through the teen years. There are things you can do right now that will promote positive changes and meaningful breakthroughs.

With a better understanding of your teen's world and her new teen-needs, you can approach her in a way that supports a stronger connection, improved communication and greater respect.

I've been coaching teens for over ten years and through countless conversations, I've gathered valuable insights into their unique struggles and ways of viewing the world. I've learned the type of support and communication they appreciate and respond to. I know what they really need from their parents!

The following pages share these insights. You will discover seven core teen needs and how to address those needs as you guide your teen toward adulthood.

## *About Me*

My passion for educating and empowering parents and girls started when I was a teacher. During that time, I saw first-hand how social and emotional challenges impacted academic progress. I watched my female students struggle with low self-esteem, girl-drama, and family changes – and I wanted to help. During graduate school, I decided to dive into girl dynamics and study relational aggression. I wrote my master's thesis on the topic and created a curriculum designed to teach girls about confidence, understanding and accepting differences, and resolving conflict. I began to teach these lessons in my classroom and designed creative yoga classes for preteens, teens, and mother-daughter pairs.

In 2012, I started my coaching practice, Inspire Balance.

I specialize in coaching parents, teens, and young adults. My personalized coaching programs help girls build self-awareness, self-esteem, resilience, and perspective. My clients sharpen their focus on their future and connect with their core-values. They gain a sense of purpose and direction and move forward with confidence and optimism.

As a parent coach, I provide a fresh perspective and practical solutions to the challenges that arise when parenting teens. Parents who complete my coaching program learn effective ways to connect, communicate, and support their teens. They experience improved communication and a stronger relationship with their teen.



## Experience and Training

- Over 20 years of coaching and teaching experience
- Certified Family, Parent, and Teen Coach, Academy for Family Coach Training
- Certified in Foundations of Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania
- Certified Teen Life Coach, Teen Wisdom Inc.
- Master's in Education
- Bachelor's in Liberal Studies, minor in Child Development
- Credentialed Teacher and Administrator
- Featured author in Good Life Family Magazine, San Diego Family Magazine, and the Kids Helping Kids book series.

## What your teen needs but isn't asking...

Before you read on, take a moment to drop in. Close your eyes and imagine your teen. See her face looking up at you with bright, wide, curious eyes. See her slight smile and open heart. Hear her delicate voice as she says,

“Mom/Dad, there are a few things I'd like you to know about me. These are things that I really need from you but haven't known how to ask.”



## **1** *I need you to honor and respect who I am, not what I do.*

I love your praise. When you say you're proud of me, I feel proud too. But what really matters to me is your respect. When you honor my personal qualities – those that are behind my accomplishments– my self-awareness deepens and my self-esteem grows. I begin to connect with the traits that improve my motivation and help me overcome challenges. I feel more connected to who I am.

**Try this-** Take a few moments to jot down the qualities of your teen. Circle at least three qualities that you can honor and respect this week. You can also ask her which of her personal strengths help her in life and/or those she is most proud of.

## **2** *I need you to listen to me, without trying to solve my problems or giving me advice.*

The best kind of listening is when you open your ears and your heart and step into my shoes. I need you to validate what I say so I feel that my feelings and experiences are important. When you respond with well-meaning advice that I haven't asked for, I get the message that my feelings are not valued and you don't fully understand. This makes me want to close up. However, when you give me space to express myself and encourage me to think and reflect, you gain insight into my world and learn more about what matters to me. This makes me feel a deeper connection and more trust. It makes me want to open up more.

**Try this-** Listen intently. Don't interrupt. When your teen is done sharing, say, "What I think I understand from what you've said is that this happened, then this happened, which led to you feeling... and what you now need is for ... Does that sound right?" If you feel your teen needs your advice or guidance, ask her first and honor her response. When she says, "yes" she will be more receptive to what you have to say.

### **3** *I need you to avoid minimizing my so-called “Friend Drama.”*

Friendships are a critical part of my life. My social circle is my main source of happiness, security, and identity. It is also complex and dynamic. Things are constantly shifting and changing. Sometimes, the girls around me use friendship as a weapon. When I’m caught up in a conditional friendship or involved in covert aggression, I do not need you to tell me that this will pass or I should make new friends. I need your support and encouragement. I need you to teach me how to navigate the complicated web of girl groups and strengthen my sense of what’s important in a friend.

**Try this-** Talk about the characteristics of best friends, good friends, and pretty good friends. Identify qualities of friendships or groups that make your teen feel happy and supported. Give her opportunities to explore and determine what friendships mean to her and how she shows up as a friend. Talk with her about how to be assertive and stand up for herself.

### **4** *I need you to teach me how to love and accept myself.*

Every day, I receive multiple messages that I am not good enough. My world is full of competition and comparison. I am hypercritical of who I am as a student, athlete, son or daughter, friend, and person. Even on those days when I feel good about myself, I don’t show it. I’m not sure of the difference between healthy confidence and being full of myself. I need you to teach me about self-acceptance. Show me how to honor and embrace all sides of myself, including those that are less than perfect.

**Try this-** Honor your teen’s qualities. (Follow the actions in Teen Need #1.) Talk about the differences between arrogance and healthy confidence. Model healthy confidence and point out examples of confident women. Honor imperfections, both hers and your own.

**5** *I need you to talk with me about gratitude.*

I don't know the power of gratitude. I don't know that gratitude can be a game-changer because it promotes positive shifts in my brain that lead to positive actions, emotional balance, better relationships, and broader perspective. Please teach me about gratitude. Show me that it requires pause, reflection, and expression of thanks. Give me opportunities to experience the benefits of an attitude of gratitude.

**Try this-** Get started with a simple, daily practice of sharing gratitude each morning or evening. Take time to recognize what's good, acknowledge the blessings in the challenges, and appreciate all the experiences life brings our way.

**6** *I need you to allow me to practice being assertive.*

You might not know this, but I have already figured out that adults regularly enforce arbitrary rules. This is one reason why I question and defy what you say. Instead of losing your temper, I need you to use what you might see as rebellion or having a fit as an opportunity to teach me a valuable life-skill: How to evaluate authority figures and make thoughtful choices about when to contend and when to resist.

**Try this-** Start honest, calm, and frank conversations about rules, offer reasonable explanations, acknowledge your teen's perspective, and sometimes, engage in negotiation.

**7** *I need you to see conflicts as an opportunity to foster emotional intelligence.*

I know I sometimes use you as a dumping ground for my feelings. When I unload the stresses of my day, remember that I am taking advantage of a reliable support system. This is my way of dealing with stress in a wise, healthy way. When I vent, listen with an open heart and help me understand what certain feelings reveal and what I can do to honor and care for myself.

**Try this-** Talk about feelings! Teach your teen that certain feelings signal a time to take certain action. For example, sadness may be a signal to step back from a situation, reset, or express a personal boundary.



## *Final words*

Now that you have more insight into your teen's needs and the small shifts you can make to meet those needs, take a step back. Reflect on how you will use these insights to parent with a fresh perspective. As you begin to parent in a new way, notice how your relationship with your teen begins to change. Observe the positive shifts in your teen's responses when you operate from a place of deep understanding and calm. Envision how your life will change when you replace fear, frustration, and worry with insight, trust, and intention.

It's time to embrace the exciting and fulfilling journey of parenting teens. You and your teen deserve it.

For more information on coaching for parents, teens, and young adults, please schedule a free discovery session. During this call, you will also receive specific tools and strategies to use right away!

