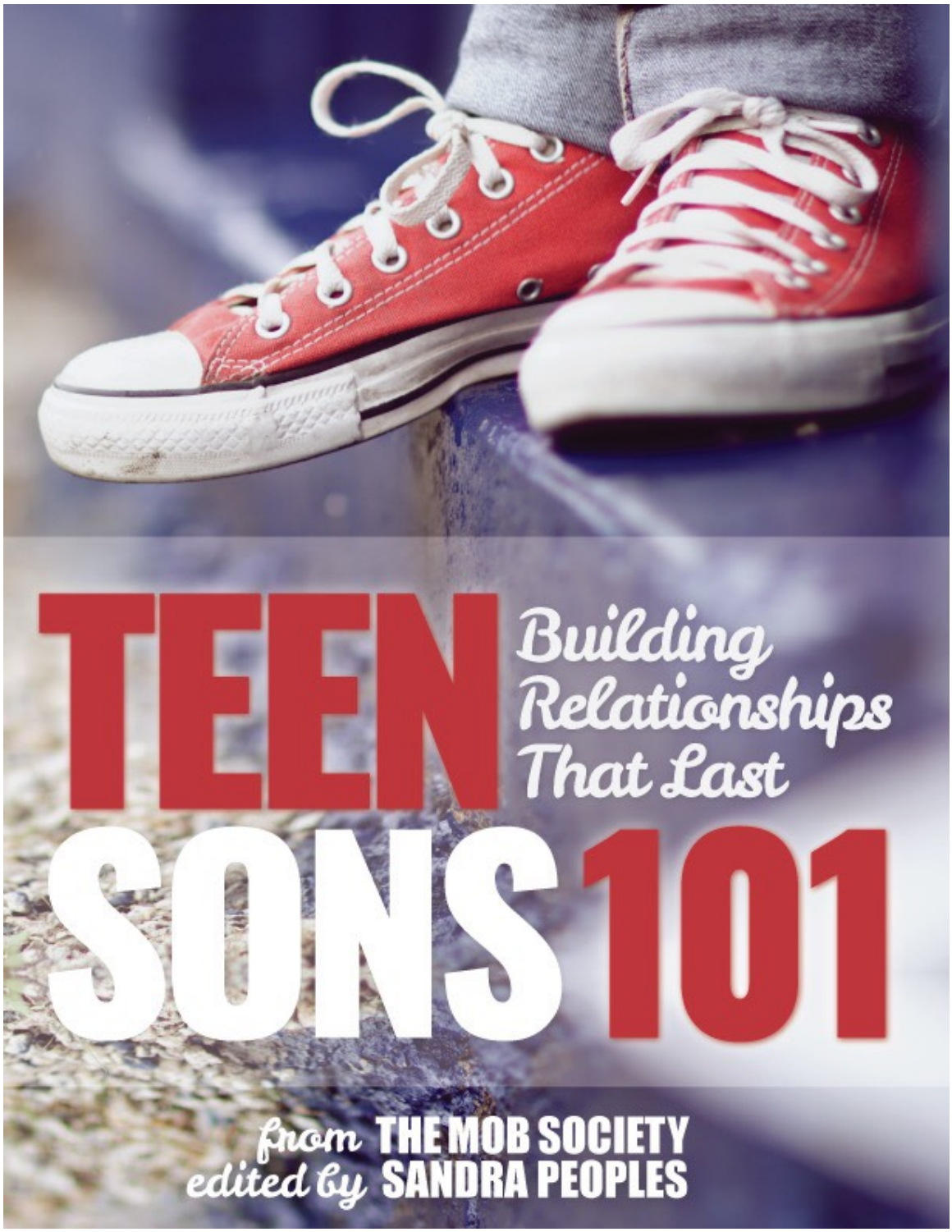
TEEN SONS 101
Building Relationships That Last
from THE MOB SOCIETY
edited by SANDRA PEOPLES

Table of Contents

Introduction
Brooke McGlothlin

Stay Up and Listen
Melanie Young

Five Perks of Raising a Teen Boy
Laura Lee Groves

Four Ways to Grow a Young Man
Julie Sanders

Three Ways to Tune In to Your Teenage Son
Gina Smith

How to Keep and Deepen Your Relationship with Your Son
Tricia Goyer

Three Daily Reminders to Connect with Your Teenage Boy
Monica Swanson

Ten Things Your Teen Son Wants You to Know
Jacque Watkins

Eight Simple Things That Connect You with Your Teenage Boy
Lisa Whittle

How to Trust God in the Hard Times
Brooke McGlothlin

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Introduction
Brooke McGlothlin

I turn off the light and snuggle up beside him in his bed. The light from outside makes a beam ending right on his smooth, soft cheeks, and I can see him turn his eyes toward me, ready to talk about his day. In that moment, I rub my hand down his face, kiss his forehead, smooth back his hair, and thank God that I can still hold him close like this for a little while longer.

I know it's coming.

That day when snuggling will feel awkward and physical touch will change its form, and I dread it with my whole being. He's growing up fast, almost twelve, and I know my time is limited.

I can still take him in a wrestling match, but just barely.

I can talk him down off the ledge, but only because his issues are still fairly small.

I'm still his #1 source of comfort, but he's identifying more and more with his friends.

My oldest son is growing up, becoming a man before my very eyes, and I'm both delighted and devastated at every turn. Bittersweet is the word of this season. Soon that soft face will be prickly and rough.

If you're a mom of a teenage son, or even a son on the cusp of this new season of life, you probably feel a mixture of pure joy at the man he's becoming and pure terror at all he still needs to learn. Maybe you feel a sense of pride in your accomplishment, but also a little bit of sadness that the extreme hands-on mothering you've been used to is coming to a close. Your tears are joy, sadness, excitement, and nervous concern intermingled.

The whole world is before him, and that makes you happy, but what you wouldn't give to pull your little boy into your lap one more time ...

How does a mom continue to have deep relationship with her son as he grows up?
How does she discipline him in a way that honors his manhood and maturity?
How does she help him choose wisely in such a crucial period of life?
What does a teenage son really need from his mom?

All of these issues weigh on a mom as she watches her son interact with the world around him and rightfully so. There's much in the world today to be scared of, but

that's why The MOB Society exists. We've put together this ebook for you as a manual of sorts. *Teen Sons 101* helps you learn how to build relationships that last, even in the hard times.

We pray it blesses you and gives you hope for the years to come.

Serving Together,
Brooke McGlothlin

Stay Up and Listen
Melanie Young

My #1 piece of advice for moms of teenage boys: Stay up late and listen.

At my house it looks like this ... I'm exhausted and really want to be in bed, but the trouble is that I'm so tired I don't want to walk upstairs, so I sit there piddling around on social media. Finally, with my eyes about to start bleeding, I reach to close my computer and stumble up to my room and fall into bed.

Not so fast there, Melanie,

"Mom? Have you got a minute?" My insides let out a gut-wrenching NOOOOOOO!!!!!!! while I calmly reply, "Sure, honey. What's on your mind?" I glance around frantically noticing that my dear husband has slipped upstairs and our son and I are alone. My heart sinks. (Hey, I'm only human, and I was utterly exhausted.)

"I just wanted to talk. I've got some stuff on my mind …" he confesses and an hour later I'm even more tired, but I'm so glad I stayed up.

Those times when everyone else is in bed are rich. They're parenting on steroids. Always stay up when they ask. Always. No matter how much it stinks. Just get some coffee or something, okay?

The other part is listening, which is harder than it sounds.

Sometimes teens talk on and on about things we don't care about at all. Listen anyway. Sound interested. After all, you are interested in your son, aren't you?

Sometimes they are worried about things that are silly. Or determined to talk about something urgent that's not urgent at all.

Listen anyway.

Sometimes they just want to chat at really inconvenient times. Seriously, their melatonin production is a couple of hours off and they get sleepy later and wake up later. Pry your eyelids open and listen. Before you know it, they'll be off at college.

Listen while you can.

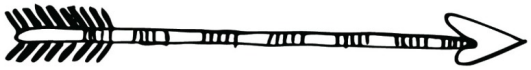
I am laughing, but every word is true. Teens want to talk late at night, alone, at inconvenient times. You may not feel like you want to listen, but teens are quiet

when you feel like talking and open up when you feel like sleeping. It's worth it though, because when mom is there to listen when they need her, when she listens to what they care about, they keep coming back. They keep asking for advice. You can't beat that.

Our adult sons have become some of our best friends. We enjoy them so much and they enjoy us. It took a lot of late nights to get here, though, so grab a cup of coffee and say, "What's on your mind, son?" and listen. You'll be glad you did.

Five Perks of Raising a Teen Boy

Laura Lee Groves



Raising a teen boy has its perks, though listening to the general public you'd think it's the worst thing ever. I won't sugarcoat the experience, but it isn't all bad. As with anything in life there are drawbacks, however, there are also perks.

The good news is there are ways to highlight the perks. And if there's anything moms need, it's more positivity in our days.

1. We Get to See Change and Growth

In the early years, any changing fell on us—WE changed diapers and diets and environments and rules because our boys needed that. Now, they're changing, and what they need is a little space. They need room to figure out who they are and where they're going. That doesn't mean moms are not important. We get to see them spread their wings, make decisions, learn from things, and eventually overcome. Those things only happen if we back up a bit. Balance is key—we should let our teens know we're here and most importantly, our love will always be here. Then sit back and let them navigate while being open to dialogue and discussion when they ask.

2. We Get to Watch Them Process.

Teens feel and experience new things—some good and some bad. Whichever camp these feelings and experiences fall into, teens need to process them and many times that is through talking. Let them vent. Listen to them. We have the opportunity to validate their words when we sit, actively listen, and thoughtfully respond.

Questions like "How do you feel about that?" or "What do you think about that?" let them know you care about their changing feelings and perspectives. When venting becomes hurtful or teen angst spills over onto the whole family, remind them that often feelings are not facts. By taking the opportunity to talk one-on-one and reminding them that respect is still important, we reinforce that it's okay to have a bad day, however it's not okay to impose that on everyone in the family.

3. We Get to Have Fun and BE Fun.

We can't fear the dreaded eye-roll so much that we don't give in to a bit of fun. Teens won't always tell us that they want to be kids again, but sometimes they do. The family is the only safe place. Peer pressure is off and teens can just be themselves—so take advantage of it. Some of our best family memories were made when our boys were teens. They're not completely our peers yet, but they are functioning more like adults than little children. Enjoy that.

4. We Get To Look To the Future.

Continue pointing them forward. When school is tough, remind them that one day they'll have that diploma in hand.

When they worry about a relationship, we get to share our own teen struggles and successes.

Dream about their future. We get to tell them how much we believe in them—that one day, they will be what God has purposed for them. Every step we take together with our teen sons, whether on a hard day or a good day, is part of their journey to adulthood.

Let's be encouragers by reminding them, "Look how far you've come."

5. We Get to Be Part of the Same Team

In a time when our sons begin to stand alone, a united mission keeps us all on the same page. This verse served as a great reminder during our boys' teen years: *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

First, we moms are Christ's ambassadors to our teenage boys; God is making His appeal through us, to our sons.

As a family, we are united in that mission. Our family serves as an ambassador for Christ; He makes His appeal to those around us through us.

Be a unit.

Hang together as a family.

When we focus on the perks of a teen son, life can be quite enjoyable.

Four Ways to Grow A Young Man

Julie Sanders

Dear Mom,

Jake had just driven off to school when I sat down to write to you this morning. My thoughts were interrupted by news that my mentor of twenty years had lost her battle with cancer. She was there the day my baby boy was born, for his stitches and school decisions, and just recently for my questions about him becoming a young man. Her sudden absence paralyzed me and I forgot all about you.

But then I thought back to the last conversation I had with my sweet mentor, the one when we sat in our pajamas and drank tea late at night in her family room. I confessed feeling like I don't always know my son in this teenage season, that I sometimes miss the little boy who wanted to marry me, and that I need wisdom to connect with him as he emerges into manhood from boyhood. This season of a young man is so new to me. She listened, laughed, and made me laugh. She even let me cry too. Then she unwrapped the invaluable gift of her wisdom on what matters most when raising a boy to become a young man.

• Stand for What We Believe (Even When He Explores What He Believes)
Their respect for us will keep us connected as he finds his way.
• Make Our Home a Place He Belongs (Even When He Chooses a Different Style)
Let little things go that could make him feel unwelcome or uncomfortable.
• Embrace the One He Loves (Even if She is Different Than You)
They will love us for loving their friends and ultimately, their mate.
• Encourage Him to Be the Man God Made Him to Be (Even If It's Different Than His Dad) Your support and acceptance will keep him connected to your family.

I went home the next day knowing I could loosen my grip on my teenage son and let his heavenly Father shape him into the young man HE wants him to be. I felt the relief that comes from having a mom who's "been there" tell me I'll be okay and my boy will be okay too.

The next week, she was diagnosed with aggressive cancer. Two grown, devoted sons stayed by their mom's side in each of her precious final days. Memories of my mentor and her wise words reminded me of how much of a difference she made for me in each season of my life as the mom of a boy.

And that's when I remembered you. I want to carry on my mentor's legacy by giving the gift of encouragement to another mom. You'll be okay with your growing boy too, my friend, even as he transitions to less of a boy and more of a young man. Stand for what you believe, make your home a place your boy belongs, embrace the

one he loves, and encourage him to become the man God made him to be. Keep on loving that son-turning-man, and your connection will endure the seasons of his life and yours.

Three Ways to Tune In to Your Teenage Son

Gina Smith

Dear Mom,

When my son was young, I would think about the future and I often battled the fear of what might happen when he became a teenager. Do you ever feel that way? Knowing our relationship would change as he got older I was fearful of what it would turn into. Change was inevitable, but I didn't want to lose the sweetness.

Fear not! There is hope!

One of the things I have worked hard to do is to nurture my relationship with him by connecting with him in any way possible. This connecting has looked different in each season, but here are just a few of the ways we've kept our relationship strong.

- Model Humility: Admit When You Are Wrong

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience…" (Colossians 3:12)

Beginning at a young age, my husband and I would regularly take the time to ask each child if there was anything we were doing that bothered, hurt, or frustrated them. It often brought to light things that we didn't realize we were doing. It gave us insight into where they were and how we could best encourage them.

I remember clearly the day I sat with my then elementary school age son and asked him if there was anything I was doing or saying that frustrated him, or anything I needed to work on as a mom. He quietly thought for a few minutes and then said,

"Well, Mom, sometimes at night when I wake up and I'm scared, I call out to you. And sometimes you get irritated. That kind of hurts my feelings." Grieved by my lack of sensitivity, I asked him to forgive me and told him it was something I would work on. I thanked him for being brave enough to be honest with me. And from that day on I purposed to try to respond better when he woke me up in the middle of the night because he was afraid.

Practicing tuning in over the years has been very eye opening and humbling, but it has shown our children that we're people who are in a process of growing just like they are. It has helped to pull our children closer to our side (even in their teen years!), helped my husband and me become better listeners, and has been used as a tool to help us become even better parents.

If we're unable to receive input or we make excuses for our behavior such as claiming that we're "too old to change," we are the ones who lose! We will lose relationships with our children, opportunities to grow and be humbled, chances to set an example, and lastly, we will lose the respect of our children.

We must admit that we don't know everything. We must not insist that our

way is always the right way. It's a good thing when our children see that we don't know it all and that we're seeking help from the only One who does. If we live humbly before our children, I believe it will be one of the most important things God uses to draw our children to Him.

- Give Them The Gift of Silence

It's easy to automatically reflect on our own childhood and want to give our children the "When I was your age ..." lecture. I've found in most cases that this speech only causes frustration. Our children are not us. They're individuals. They need us to be functioning in the here and now and focus on who they are. As easy as it can be for us to go down memory lane, our parenting should not be based on all that we experienced as children. It's important that we purpose to seek wisdom from God and study who our children are as individuals.

As my kids approached the teen years, my husband and I found ourselves reflecting back on our own experiences, so we came up with a signal that we call the "You're Going Down Memory Lane" signal! It's a gentle reminder that helps us to listen more than we talk.

When I practice listening more than I talk as we are going about our daily lives, my son will often open up about what is on his mind. Many conversations happen when I least expect it—over a meal, in the car, or on the way to a sporting event. It is easy to get stuck in parenting mode, teaching mode, or lecture mode, when a "be quiet and listen mode" is more appropriate. This validates what they are thinking and feeling and that you really want to hear what they have to say!

- Turn Off, but Tune In!

In this age of technology much of what we do is done on the computer or cell phone. It's easy to be distracted by what is now an ever-present pull, easily accessible, and seemingly urgent. Starting when they were very young, as much as possible, I have made it a policy to turn off all technology when my family enters the room so I can focus on them with as little distraction as possible. Of course, at times that may not be possible. I may need to finish up an email or quickly come to a breaking point on a project. There are times when we're watching a movie as a family or when everyone is busy doing their own thing, so it's okay to continue working, but as much as I possibly can, my computer closes when my family is home together. It shows them they are what is most important and that I want to focus on them with no distractions.

Modern technology is much more than a distraction, though, and it can be used for good! Because of the technology we do have, there are many creative ways to use it to tune in and communicate with our children. For example, the cell phone can be a wonderful way to keep in touch. As soon as your child gets a cell phone, start texting them regularly!

Messages like,
"Just checking in."
"I love you."
"I'm proud of you."
"I'm thankful for you."

"When will you be home?" reaffirm your interest in and affection for your teenage son. Cell phones and text messages are just another way I can tune in and connect with them. It's a great way to take advantage of this age of technology.

Even though my children are now grown, I continue to look for ways to tune in. I don't think that will ever end no matter what season of life I'm in. Yes, it does take time and creativity and just when we think we have it down, our kids grow and change. Then we have to try new ways to tune in. Our children are worth the effort, don't you think?

How to Keep and Deepen Your Relationship with Your Son

Tricia Goyer

My six-foot-tall son lumbers into the room and sinks onto the sofa. “So, I've been thinking about Chapter Two ...” he says.

I pause what I'm doing and we talk. We talk about fictional conflict, inciting incidents, and motivation—what the character wants more than anything. Nathan has just finished writing a novel and lately we've been chatting about that.

I have six children and my relationship with each of them is different.

They all enjoy different things, and for a while I wondered how I could best relate to my sons as teens. Yes, I cheered at their basketball games. I often found myself out to lunch with them one-on-one, or at sci-fi movies, but I wanted something more—something that could just be “ours.”

It turns out that Nathan, my third oldest, and I both enjoy writing and plotting. We relish figuring out what makes a story good … then what makes it great. After nearly every movie we watch, we talk about what worked and what didn't. As a homeschooler this started with chapter books that I read to him during school time.

Nathan also attended homeschool writing classes I taught. We'd chat about all the elements of fiction writing on the way home. It wasn't a forced conversation. I didn't read a book and try to follow it. Instead, I just opened myself up to my son. We have talked about our shared interest and I've watched our relationship grow. Soon talking about plots and writing became “our thing.”

As I was thinking about this, I asked Facebook friends what they enjoy doing with their teen boys.

Lyn: My seventeen-year-old and thirteen-year-old and I are in Civil Air Patrol together. I'm the squadron deputy commander. We love air shows and doing this together.

Angela: My son invites me to join his fantasy football draft and March Madness bracket competitions. It might be just to make fun of me though.

Connie: My son used to like to browse antique shops with me. I think that's what instilled in him a love of history.

Sandra: Going to cons together! (As in comic conventions.) And we always go to midnight shows of nerdy sci-fi/fantasy/comic book films.

Karen: My son just got his pro card and he is a Pro Bowler. I am his manager and we go to all the tournaments together. He just turned twenty.

Marci: Several years ago two of my sons and I trained for a sprint triathlon together. It was an awesome experience and on race day when we finished it was fun to celebrate. Later one of my sons and I did a mountain bike triathlon and during the off road part we actually passed each other on the trail and gave each other a high five. It was a great experience.

Doni: We shoot our compound bows. It is his passion but I enjoy the time I've had with him.

Tami: I have three teen boys. I fish with them, play basketball, ride bikes, run, participate in their fantasy football league, target shoot, and raise a worm farm with them.

Donna G: My son and I played racquetball together (until I fell on the court and broke my wrist in four places). A good bonding experience (he and I, not my wrist!).

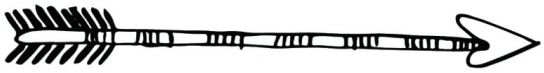
Donna O: Three sons, three different things we do. 1. Scrabble with the youngest (sixteen). We both play for blood! 2. Yard sales/junk stores with middle son. 3. Deep discussions with oldest son. Usually at 2:00 am.

Karla: Riding motorcycles

As you can see, “our thing” is as unique as each mother and son. In fact, just today I had one-on-one time with my three-year-old boy. What did he ask to do? Watch Lego Superhero as we snuggled on the couch and ate fruit snacks. Who knows, as the years pass Legos—or superheroes—just might be “our thing.” And hopefully we'll graduate to something more than fruit snacks!

Three Daily Reminders to Connect with Your Teenage Boy

Monica Swanson



I just want to connect with him. I've spent fifteen years with this kid. He used to rattle off every thought that went through his head, but sometimes it can get very quiet, awkward even. We've always been so close, and now I might sit by his side and can't think of one single thing to say. I don't want to say the wrong thing and push him away. I don't want him to think I'm trying too hard. I'm baffled.

I just want to connect.

That awkward scenario doesn't happen too often with either of my teen boys and I'm super thankful for that. Overall we have kept a healthy connection as they have entered their teenage years. But still, teenage boys will have these moments, and us moms ... we need to deal with it.

When those moments do happen, I've discovered a little trick to help us connect. I sort of just stumbled upon it, but the more I practice it, the more certain I am that it works.

Connecting with your teenage son can be as simple as *BEING IN MOTION* with them. Boys need to move a lot, and physically doing things with your son is a sure-fire way to open up communication.

When I want to chat with my boys, I will often get outside with them. We shoot baskets together, pick fruit, or take the garbage down to the street together. With almost no effort, I find the conversation flowing. Sure, there may be some quiet moments, but soon the chatting begins. Taking a walk or hike is probably my favorite way to open the channels of communication.

It doesn't have to be playing sports or going outdoors. I might ask one of my sons to help me fold laundry or do the dishes. As we work, there is a natural connection. We may not talk non-stop, but a little joke here, a comment there ... which often lands us in a real-live conversation.

The car can be another magical place and it's for that reason that when I'm alone in the car with one kid, they put phones and iPods away. A little background music and the car provide a great place to chat.

Though teenage boys can seem like quite a mystery, I find these these THREE DAILY REMINDERS help me find a connection with my boys:

1. My teenage boys are NOT who they used to be. I need to let go of what I considered "normal" in his little boy years and allow him to grow into the man he is becoming.

2. My teenage boys still need me. Though my role has changed, I am still important in their life. They might actually *want* to tell me about the things going on in their lives, but perhaps aren't sure how to start the conversation. *It is my job to look for opportunities and stay open for when the time is right.*

3. My best chance of connecting with my teenage sons is when we are moving. If I can find an activity or a project to do with my sons, they will be much more likely to open up.

Parenting teens is one of my favorite things in the world. It has taken me some time to adjust, but I love what we are growing in this new season. I encourage you to let go of old expectations or sentimental notions. Embrace the teenage years, have fun with your son, and pray for him as he is growing into the man you've been preparing him to be since he was born!

Ten Things Your Teen Son Wants You to Know

Jacque Watkins

We sit at lunch, just me and my teen son. Right after we order I just say it, I ask him, "Can I have your advice?"

"Sure," he says, drowning his bread in the balsamic and shoving the quarter-loaf in his mouth.

"If a mom wants to build a close relationship with her teen, what would you tell her to do?" I sit and hope he doesn't see how badly I want to know and the silence that follows almost smothers me. For a moment I wonder if I should have asked at all.

He's almost seventeen and our relationship is strong—stronger than I ever expected it might be considering all we've been through. I'm so thankful.

But having a teen son is particularly hard. Ten short years ago he was my little guy, lovingly gazing into my eyes and crawling up on my lap. I was the only woman he loved and the first one who held his heart, but it won't be long before all that changes.

My heart simultaneously aches and bursts. This stage is hard, even with a strong relationship, and I'm certainly open to tips to make it better.

And then he answers. The words pour out like a river, like I've just breached a dam waiting to be opened. He has so much to say. And I am glad to listen and brainstorm so I can let you all in on what my teen told me.

10 things your teen son wants you to know:

1. Be cool
Be laid back but engaged, classy but fashionable—stylish and aware of the latest trends. Be a hospitable host who welcomes his teen friends. And provide food, LOTS of food, whenever possible!

2. Let conversation happen naturally
As much as we long to know how our teen is doing, do not force conversation through repetitive interrogation. Allow conversation to happen spontaneously while engaged in an activity together—driving in the car, cooking dinner, or even shopping. It's possible that the more time spent in each other's space will foster more conversation.

3. Own your mistakes and refuse to be a hypocrite

If teens are blessed with any sixth sense, it's their ability to detect hypocrisy. For that very reason it's so important for us to admit when we're wrong and offer an apology with a humble heart. It's also important to share our failures with our sons at appropriate moments—moments when it helps him with whatever he's facing. If our teens see us as real people, they're more likely to respect us and learn from us as well.

4. Refuse to micromanage
Even though this involves trust and letting go, it is so important that we give our teen sons incremental freedom and allow them to practice making decisions. Until their choices require a removal of that freedom, let's refuse to micromanage the details of the things that are their responsibility. This will make them feel respected and convey your belief that they are both capable and trustworthy.

5. Fill our emotional needs elsewhere
We must not look to our teen sons to meet our emotional needs. They were our babies, it's true, and we desire them to reciprocate that love, but behaving in a way that obligates them to reciprocate, makes them feel forced, and may drive our teens away. Our needs should be met by our time with God, by the strengthening of our marriages, and spending time with our friends. Being cognizant to loosen and eventually cut those apron strings allows them to develop into the independent adults they need to become.

6. Be the kind person you'd like him to marry
It's no surprise that often our sons end up choosing a spouse similar to the woman who raised them. If we care about the quality of our sons' future spouses, we need to focus on growing our own character and embodying the characteristics of the kind of spouse we would want our sons to one day marry.

7. Don't nag
Let's refuse to be the dripping faucet that irritates and annoys our teens. If their behavior must change, natural consequences tend to be the best motivators. This not only conveys our respect and confidence in their ability to make a different choice next time, but also puts the responsibility where it belongs—on them.

8. Have interests other than just our teens
We need to resist making our life as a mom solely revolve around our teens. It makes them feel like you can't do life on your own two feet, which leads them to lose respect for you. Having some independent interests will help our sons grow healthier relationships, with us and with others. So please, find hobbies, discover new interests, or invest in friendship and service to others—all of which will serve as a good model for how they should do life as an adult.

9. Ask their opinion
As teens, our sons long to feel important. They want to be heard and know their opinions truly matter. So ask them what they think and be ready to listen!

10. Be prepared to give them advice

Our teen sons are going to have questions—big ones!—about God, our society, and our world. And when our teens ask, it is so important for us to be prepared to give them an answer. So please, study. We must research the issues and know where we stand. That way when they ask, we'll have a great answer.

Eight Simple Things That Connect You with Your Teen Boy

Lisa Whittle

I played the air guitar to an amazing 80s song in the car last night. My teen son, the middle one, sat in the seat next to me. You would have thought I was Selena Gomez or Ariana Grande the way he was looking at me, with eyes that smiled and said *you're awesome*.

It is among my favorite things in life when my teen boys look at me this way.

Of course, I'm not always the cool mom. Sometimes they notice my meddling and breathe that heavy sigh and say an exasperated "Wow, thanks, Mom," when I tell them "No you can't go to that movie with those teens whose parents I don't know."

But we are close. Really close. The kind of close that you hope and pray for, but aren't sure sixteen and thirteen will allow and then are gloriously surprised when it does.

Every day I'm grateful that among the millions of things I did wrong, the way I have purposed to stay connected to my boys has indeed worked. Mostly, I'm convinced that God has just been gracious and made up for my lack.

And yes, I've read them the Bible at night. And I pray over their beds. And I've had long conversations with them (longer than they prefer, trust me) to speak destiny and love into their heart and all the other good stuff moms do that is important. But you know what I've found?

It's not that hard for teen boys to stay connected to their moms. A lot of simple, everyday things help a lot with that too.

And so, if I may, my humble offering of the fun, crazy, hard and most rewarding things I have done and continue to do as my boys grow up.

1. Let them be silly sometimes. Boys will eventually be men that have jobs and bills and families they are responsible for and lots of other heavy things on their backs. For now, let them think standing in the snow in a bathing suit flexing for a picture is awesome, and grossing you out by giving you sweaty hugs after ball practice is a-ok with you. (Protest, even, for a little extra dramatic measure, which they will love.) Let them get by with some boy bathroom humor that grosses you out. They are born with this innate male need to express, for whatever crazy reason. It's simple: just for a few minutes in the car or wherever you are when it comes up, pretend to lose your hearing.

2. Care about their interests, which means attentiveness not endurance. Trust me, they can tell the difference. When they tell you about how sick a pair of shoes is? Know that sick means amazing and nod your head in agreement. They will love you for it. When they have a ball game? Move heaven and earth to be there, even if you can't stand baseball and don't understand the sport. Your job is to become an expert on your child, and what he loves, you love too, just because he does.

3. Force them to take ridiculous selfies with you. They will moan and complain, but they will secretly love you for wanting a picture with them. Also? It will prepare them for all the selfies their girlfriend will make them do in the future.

4. Let them have the last bite. Like, that last bite of your favorite cheesecake in all the world—the one with the strawberry sauce dripping gloriously all over it. The last taste of heaven before you start that diet. Yep, that one. They won't forget what mom did that for them. His wife, should he have one in the future, will love him, but even she may not give him that last bite.

5. Tuck them into bed at night, even when they are huge and tower over you. They will act like it's unnecessary at the time, but when they ask you unexpectedly if you are going to that one night you almost forget, you will know it's more important to them than they think.

6. Have special nicknames for them that are playful and silly. Call them by those names like crazy when you are at home, but never say them in front of their friends. This is the unspoken rule of boys and moms that, when respected, helps cute mommy nicknames live on forever.

7. Remind them of moments of awesome they did when they were little. Pull out a picture and tell them the coordinating story. Boys are just miniature men that need to be complimented and appreciated in order to feel fulfilled.

8. Let their dad be the hero. Learn to love them in the background and seize moments but not need to be #1. Yes, even though you changed the diapers. Even though you wash the smelly clothes and wipe more noses and give more kisses and run their cleats up to the ball field numerous times when they leave them. Even though. You will win when their dad is more important.

Staying connected to our boys is a sign we have endured the mommy challenge of being different in almost every way, but understanding of the great needs and loves of their young male heart.

What both of us want.

How to Trust God in the Hard Times

Brooke McGlothlin

The world feels like it's crashing in all around me. My oldest son has turned away from the Lord and is living a life we never dreamed possible for him. My husband and I are distant from each other, and I'm struggling to keep it together at work. I can't lose my job or we'll go under. The bills just keep adding up, and the house is a wreck all the time. I can't even think in there, much less pray. What in the world am I supposed to do?

Over the last few days, I've gotten emails from a lot of boy moms that when put all together, sound something like the paragraph above. They're hard to read. They make me cry and cause me to get down on my knees and beg the Lord to move for you, for me, and for every mom in the world who is struggling to understand a life that hasn't turned out the way she thought it would.

Life has a way of doing that ... of making us see our future through rose colored glasses, and then turning gray once we get there.

I'm dealing with something in my own life right now that isn't going the way I hoped it would, and God is using it to teach me more about who He is and how I can trust Him in the hard times. Maybe it will help you, too?

When I know down deep that God is always going to act in His own best interest, I can trust that it will be in my best interest, too

LESSONS FROM THE HARD TIMES

1. God isn't really that interested in our happiness

Now according to some, His ultimate goal is for you to be happy and serve yourself. But obviously—at least to anyone who reads the Bible—this isn't true. I'm not saying God isn't happy when we're happy. I think it brings Him joy to see His creation at peace, laughing, loving well, and living life to the fullest. We reflect Him when we're enjoying Him! I just don't think happiness is His highest goal for our lives.

Sometimes (let's just be honest now), that feels cruel. Why would God create the world and then not want to do everything in His power to make the people in it happy? That's how *I* would do it if *I* were God ... You too, right?

Know why we would arrange things that way? Because we're selfish human beings, who at the deepest levels of the heart really just want what's best for ourselves. It takes some serious effort for most of us to find the place where we want what God wants more than we want what we want. And the reason for this is because we can't see the bigger picture.

2. It's hard for us to let go of the way *we* think things should be and embrace the way *God* thinks things should be.

We can't see everything He can see, and we don't know the end of our own personal stories. And that means if we truly love God and want to serve Him well with our lives, we have to just trust.

That's the hardest thing, you know, just trusting. It is for me, anyway. I'm much more comfortable when I feel in control, know what to expect, and see things turn out like I thought they should. Unfortunately for me, God is the only one who has the right to play that all-mighty, all-knowing, all-powerful role with His creation, so I'm left needing to submit my desires to Him over and over and over again (and all that could happen in just one day).

3. God is most interested in making HIS name great.

It's hard to understand, because God's nature is so contrary to our own, but God does everything to bring glory to Himself. All of creation screams of His majesty, and the people who are part of that creation—their blessings, joys, heartaches, and disappointments—bring attention to Him. That's why our response to the things of life—even and especially the surprises of life—are so important. They reflect Him and tell others the story of God through our lives.

When I know that God is always going to act in His own best interest, I can trust that whatever He does will be in mine. That changes my entire perspective, and has the potential to change how I respond to the things that aren't going the way I want them to.

God will make a way, because it's His nature to bring glory to His name. My friend, He wants to work in whatever situation you're in that looks bleak and gray and make it into something beautiful so that others will "sing for joy at the work of His hands" (Psalm 92:4). You and me? We're the vehicles He's chosen to display to the world how good He is, and His goodness to us has nothing to do with our circumstances. Our response to the circumstances of life, however, has the potential to whisper His greatness or scream our ingratitude so all the world can see.

Because God loves us, we can trust everything He does, everything He allows, and every prayer He doesn't answer the way we thought He should have. Because we trust Him to make His own name great, we can trust Him to work in whatever situation we find ourselves because He wants to get the glory.

I know it's a hard truth. But when life feels out of control, there has to be something we cling to, some truth that transcends how we feel or what we can see. This is it, and when we really get it, it changes everything.

Lord, please make a way for the precious mama reading this today. Would you come right now? Comfort her, strengthen her, and make her aware of your presence with her like never before? Help her to see that your heart for her is always good, because when you get the glory, she gets the best. In Jesus' big, strong, mighty name, Amen.

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