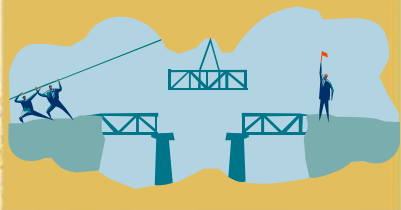


## Communication Gap Between You and Your Teen?

We all want our teens to talk with us, but they often seem hesitant. Part of our teens' hesitancy may stem from our past responses. Perhaps we have unintentionally communicated a lack of trust or acceptance in the past. Maybe they felt blamed by us or made to feel wrong by our response. I'm sure we did not intend to send those messages; but maybe we did by accident. And, those subtle, messages put roadblocks in the way of our communication. They closed the bridge to intimacy with our teen. I want to warn you about 11 such communication roadblocks that Thomas Gordon identified. Once you know them, you can avoid them...and increase effective communication with your teen.



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11 Roadblocks to  
Communicating with  
Your Teen

**And Almost Anyone Else**

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**Excessive commands and directives** communicate a lack of trust and a disbelief in our teen's ability to do what is needed.

**Constant warnings and threats** build walls of fear and resentment between us and our teens, inviting them to test the real bite of our warning or threat.

**Moralizing and lecturing** increases the feeling that one is "bad." Teens often rebel against the "shoulds," "oughts," and "musts" sown throughout the moralizing lecture.

**Giving solutions and unsolicited advice** communicates a lack of confidence in our teen's judgment or ability to find a solution on their own. Teens who "buy" this message become overly dependent on others.

**Reassuring and consoling** ignores your teen's emotions. It sends a message of our own discomfort with difficult emotions and teaches that emotional comfort is more important than connecting in the midst of emotional struggles.

**Giving logical arguments** sends the message that our teens "don't know anything," they are stupid, or don't know any better. And, teens may take drastic measures to prove that message wrong!

**Criticizing and blaming** makes a teen feel inferior, unworthy, devalued. Critical, blaming statements evoke counter-criticisms to save face. Criticize or blame...and expect an argument.

**Excessive praise** can create fear of failure, over concern with performance, and expectation of reward.

**Questioning and interrogating**...who likes to be interrogated? Teens shut down when asked too many questions.

**Telling a teen you know what their motivation or feeling is** (Analyzing /diagnosing) says "I know you better than you know yourself. If you disagree, you're wrong." This intrusive style leaves only one way to grow independent—rebel!

**Distracting and diverting** minimizes a teen's pain, excitement, concern, or joy. Your teen will feel unheard and devalued as a result.



## What Can I Do?

When parents consistently respond to their teen in these 11 ways, walls arise, roadblocks get put in place, communication suffers, and intimacy falters. You might be asking, "If these 11 things block communication, what can I do to enhance communication?" I'm glad you asked! To enhance communication, use "**simple door-openers**." Respond with statements that open the door to more conversation...statements like "really," "That's interesting," "Hmmm." These "**simple door-openers**" reveal your interest in and acceptance of your teen and what he is saying. **Simple door-openers** focus on your teen's ideas, feelings, and judgments rather than your own. That bridges the communication gap, paves the way for conversation, and creates intimate relationships!

*"Your kids require you most of all to love them for who they are, not to spend your whole time trying to correct them."—Bill Ayers*