

## What Middle Schoolers Want to Talk About<sup>1</sup>

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Can your middle-schooler talk to you? Most 10- to 14-year-olds want a warm, close relationship with their parents. However, only about a quarter of adolescents nationwide find their parents “approachable and available to talk” (Richardson, 2004, p. 87).

What do young teens want to talk about? A study appearing in the journal *Family Relations* asked a sample of middle school

students, “If you could ask your mom or dad any question and know you would get an honest answer, what question would you ask?”

The largest percentage of youth (44%) turned in questions about family, especially questions about the parent-child relationship. They asked questions about rules and responsibilities, such as “Are some of your rules really necessary?” They also wondered about parental love and asked, “Do you think I am really important?” Some questions had to do with feeling connected, such as, “Why don’t you have any time for me?” Trust and conflict also came up around issues of privacy and respect. Only 1 in 4 middle schoolers turned in questions about dating, drugs, puberty, and school, the topics that parents tend to talk about (Richardson, R. A., 2004).

To keep the family relationship strong, parents will need to be open to listening to what their young adolescents want to talk about, and not impose their own agenda. Youth may

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be less interested in talking about sensitive subjects as parents would expect, and more likely to want to discuss understanding each other, getting along, expressing love, and understanding themselves.

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## Reference

Richardson, R. A. (2004). Early adolescent talking points: Questions that middle school students want to ask their parents. *Family Relations*, 53, 87-94.