Parents may find relating to their children once they become teenagers to be challenging. Children who once listened to everything their parents said no longer want to listen to them. They have developed their own identities and are choosing to exercise their own independence. Many changes can occur within the relationships teenagers have with their parents, friends, and other authority figures.

“The importance of parent and peer relationships for adolescents has been the focus of a significant body of research. Some studies have suggested that warm, supportive parenting contributes to satisfactory peer relations.” The relationship between teenagers and parents can be frustrating for both. Up until this time the parents have taken on a role of telling the children what decisions or actions to take. The teenagers are trying to take on the new role of adulthood, and they may not be ready to completely take on that role.

Parents who are able to recognize this within their teenagers may allow them to make some decisions about their lives without the parents’ interference. These parents may enjoy still having an open relationship with their teenagers, and the teenagers may continue to seek their parents’ opinions and advice in the decision-making process.

Teenagers may also start to look to their peers for more of their direction. Some teenagers may seem to trust their peers’ judgment over their parents. “Children are most primed to turn to trusted attachment figures in times of trouble. In fact, the very presence of trusted adults or peers greatly reduces the impact of stress.”

Keeping an open line of communication is very important with teenagers. Knowing what is going on in their lives and making it known to them how much you care is a must. Make it a point to know their friends, and ask questions without seeming too pushy. See if these friends are positive for your children to be around and if they share the same interests, values, and goals. Ask questions about their families but remain open minded and do not assume all families share the same views.

Parenting styles play a big role when it comes to what kind of adults children will become. Will they be responsible, honest, respectful, and continue to strive for healthy lifestyles and relationships? Or will they become irresponsible, unable to make decisions, selfish, disrespectful, and headed for future disaster. Indulgent parents (also referred to as permissive) “are more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behavior, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation.” This in turn may create irresponsible behavior and selfishness. Opposite of indulgent would be the authoritarian parent. “Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive but not responsive. These parents provide well-ordered and structured environments with clearly stated rules. Punitive disciplinary action is common, which often leads to further disobedience”. These children tend to have a lower regard for self. Another parenting style is authoritative. These parents set clear and consistent rules. Their flexibility yet firmness leads to responsible and cooperative behaviors from the children or teenagers.

Relationships between teenagers, adults, parents, peers, and other family members are very important. Youth today face many struggles and hardships that at one time did not exist at such an early age. It is important for parents to understand the changes and challenges teenagers face and to have a parenting style that helps their children transition into adulthood.