

Seven Free Precious Gifts You Can Give Your Child Or Teenager This Year.

January is a time for taking stock of the year gone by and thinking forward to how we want things to be in the coming year. What are your thoughts for this year about how you would like your relationship to be with your child or teenager? What would you like to concentrate on to improve your relationship with your child?

Here are seven precious gifts you may like to consider as you parent your child or teen.

1. The gift of respect.

What can you do this year to really show your child you respect them? Telling your child or teen about their special qualities is a really great start. "Your caring nature really shone through today when you helped your friend who was upset."

2. The gift of listening.

How can you really listen deeply to your child this year? Will it be that you will take more time to be with them and ask them questions that really open up the conversation so that your teen's or child's opinions will be heard? Three simple little words can help with this: "Tell me more."

3. The gift of understanding.

Do you really listen to understand your child? Do you know who they really are and how they feel? This is something that is easy to let slip as our children get older and life is hectic and busy. Questions in which you reflect back and try to understand feelings below behaviours can really help in understanding your child's perspective. "It sounds like you were very disappointed that the teacher reacted that way."

4. The gift of appreciation.

How do you show your child or teen that you appreciate what they do? Do you tell them? Do you spend meaningful time with them? Do you give them physical warmth in keeping with their age and preferences? Some children like lots of hugs for example, whereas a teenage boy might just like a brief touch on the shoulder. Do you do things for them like driving them to sport and be happy offering that service? Do you very occasionally just give them a tiny present just because you love them? Which one could you try to include more of this year?

5. The gift of support.

Support is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children to allow them to learn and grow, knowing that we are there to support them in their efforts and not to rescue them. Obviously if it is a dangerous situation, then rescue is totally appropriate, but otherwise giving our children and teens the gift of age-appropriate space to explore and learn is the best way to support them to become independent beings. How will you support your child or teen this year physically, intellectually, spiritually, financially and emotionally? What can you step back from and allow them to learn to handle on their own?

6. The gift of responsibility.

How do you encourage responsibility in your child or teen? What extra things can you ask them to do as they get older to further encourage their responsibility? Can you focus less on them completing entire tasks and concentrate more on the baby steps for change that they are making? "Wow this corner of your room looks great! I'll come back in 5 minutes to see how you are doing with the rest." instead of "There's still a lot of mess to go. Get on with it."

7. The gift of independence.

Ask yourself the question: “Am I letting go of controlling my child as they get older?” One of the most wonderful gifts is allowing our children and teens to grow towards independence by giving them age-appropriate power to make their own choices and decisions. “What do you choose?” is a wonderful question to include in conversations to allow our children to experience decision making as they grow. For little ones keep the choices to two and allow more choice as your child faces their teen years.

These seven precious gifts don't cost anything except perhaps a little of our time and effort, but reap wonderful rewards by giving you and your child a loving close connection and setting a pathway for them towards respect and independence. Which gifts will you offer to your teen or child this year? Whatever you choose, may you and your child both see the benefits of an even closer relationship.