

ONE TEEN

A QUICK START GUIDE FOR
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER

Deb Talks *Truth*

One Teen

This quick start guide will help you look at one of your current relationships and what you want to do to make it stronger.

Think of one teen.

Not every teen you teach.
Not your entire youth group.
Not every teenager in your family.

Just one.

Who is the teen you want to understand better, connect with more intentionally, or simply show up for differently?



Write your one teen's name here.

Okay, I've chosen my one teen. Now what do I do?

That's where we begin.

Many times, when adults think about their relationships with teens, they jump to what needs to change or what teens need to do differently. This guide won't do that. Instead, it will ask you to reflect on your own thoughts and actions.

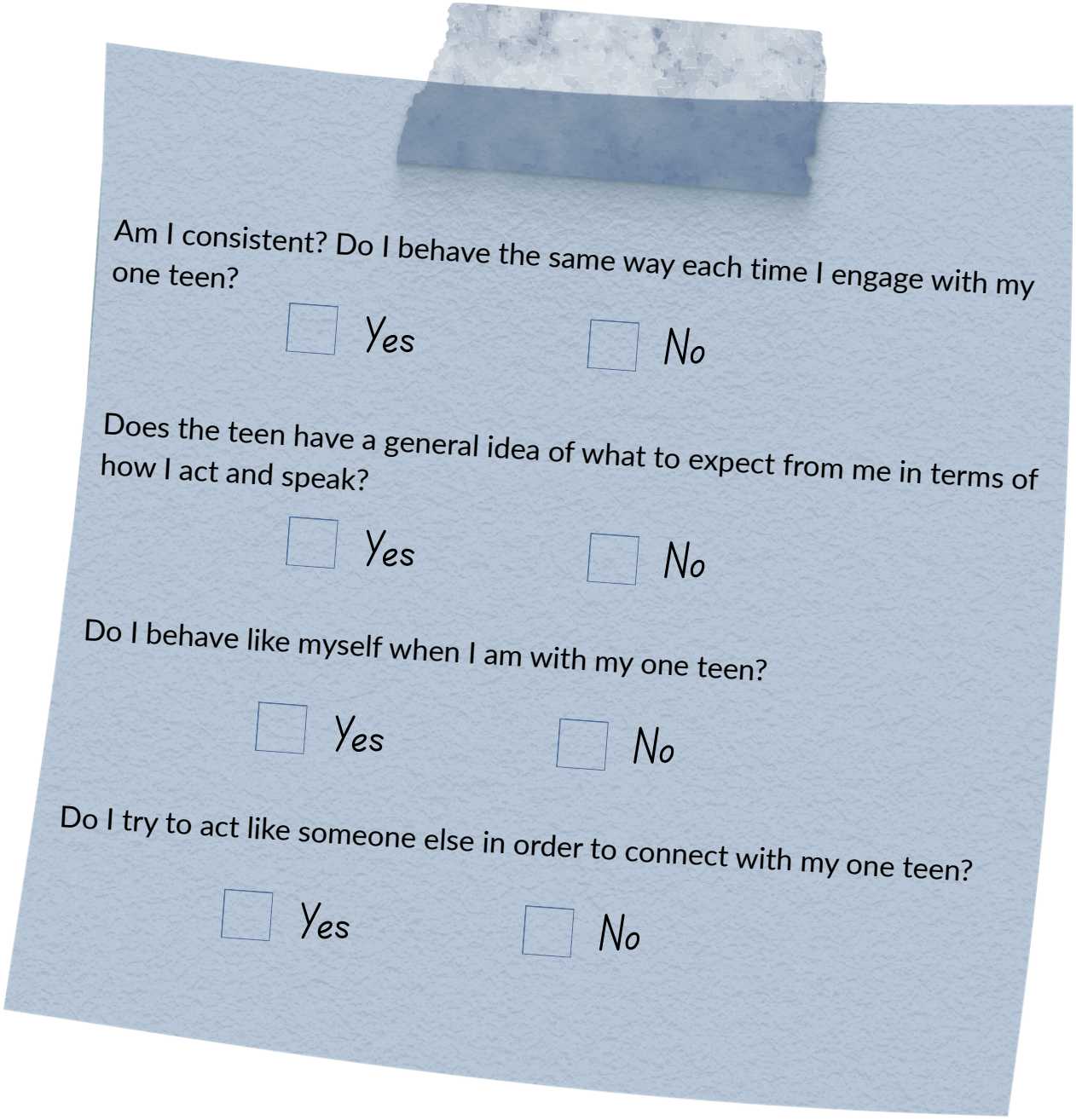
Just as we tell teens, you can only control what you do—the same is true for us as adults.

We'll explore three questions to help us identify what we can do to grow our relationship with our one teen. There will be space to jot down any observations and thoughts you have while you walk through this guide.

How do I show up for teens?

This question asks us to take an honest look at ourselves and how we show up for our one teen. Specifically, we'll look at whether we are consistent and whether we show up as ourselves.

To build a relationship that matters, teens need us to show up consistently. And, teens need to know who they are building a relationship with—who we are.



Consistency helps teens know what to expect from you. And being yourself lets them truly get to know you. There is not an exact or perfect way to show up. You just need to show up as yourself, again and again. This is where trust can grow.

What am I creating?

This question helps us explore the environment we are creating with our teen and what we might need to change. We're asking whether that environment allows a teen to feel safe, understand our expectations, and make mistakes.

To build a relationship with teens, they need to feel safe. Feeling safe with an adult means the teen doesn't feel judged, believes they can share their own ideas and opinions, and trusts that an adult will still show up for them. It sounds simple, but it's the foundation we build that relationship on.

What do I do that makes a teen feel safe?

- [ ] Use a kind tone of voice
- [ ] Listen before speaking
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

One thing that connects very closely to safety is expectations. When we take time to communicate our expectations clearly to teens, they feel safer and trust us a little more.

What are my expectations for my one teen? Think of your top 4, the ones that matter most to you. For example, speaking respectfully. Jot them down below.

-
-
-
-

"Our expectations become boundaries that help build the framework for our relationships with teens."

Building Relationships That Matter

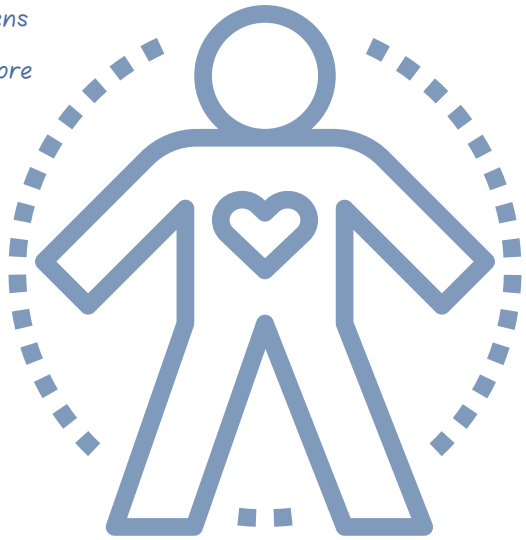
What am I creating? continued

How you communicate your expectations to your one teen matters. Keep it CLEAR.

C — Communicate clearly — Say what you expect instead of assuming they know.
L — Limit it — Keep expectations reasonable and focused; don't offer ten things at once.
E — Explain why — Give the reason behind the expectation when it matters.
A — Ask for their voice — Give them room to ask questions, clarify, or offer input.
R — Reinforce consistently — Follow through so your words and actions match.

Because teens are figuring out who they are and what they need, sometimes they need do-overs. And sometimes, a lot of them. Creating an environment for do-overs changes how a teen engages with us.

Do-overs encourage teens to see themselves as more than their mistakes.



Do-overs let teens build skills that will help them throughout adolescence and in adulthood.

Do-overs tell a teen we want them to succeed.

You want to create a relationship that is marked by safety, clearly communicated expectations, and do-overs that allow them to move forward without being defined by their past choices.

"A fresh start promises that a teen will be seen as more than their poor choices."
Building Relationships That Matter

"It can give you a chance to change who you are from the past. The past has already happened and we can't fix it. You can fix what you do now and what happens in the future."
Clara, age 12
Building Relationships That Matter

How am I interacting?

Our third question encourages us to identify specific things we do when we interact with our one teen. It can also point out where we might struggle. The actions we take shape our relationship.

Every relationship requires listening. For teens, feeling heard by adults can also help them feel seen.

What do you do with your one teen to just listen and not lead or teach?

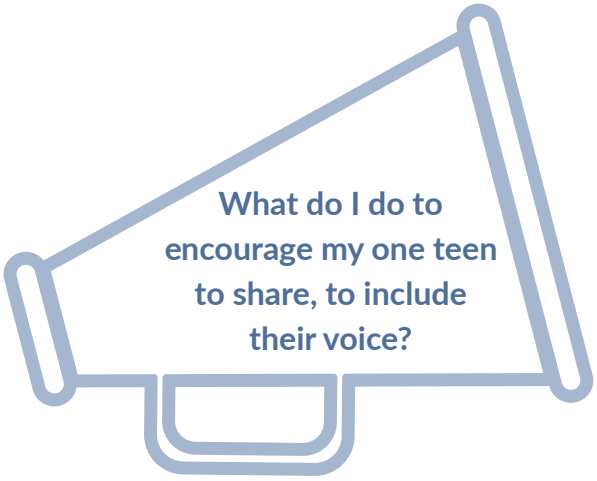






- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

All teens have a voice that is a part of who they are. When we include their voice in our relationship, we are letting them know we value them.



How am I interacting? continued

Not every teen is the same, and not every teen is like us. To meaningfully connect with a teen, we need to see their uniqueness and see them for who they are, not for who we want them to be.

Fill the hearts with the qualities and traits you love about your one teen.



Teens need to know that someone sees possibility in them. If we want to build relationships with teens that matter, identifying and communicating the possibility we see is an important building block.

What do I do to make it a priority to tell my teen what I see in them?

"It makes me feel like someone believes in me. It just makes you feel special. Someone sees something that you don't."

Parker, age 17

Building Relationships That Matter

Moving from Reflection to Action

You've done some potentially hard, thought-provoking self-reflection. You may even have started to identify things you would like to change in how you connect with your one teen. Now we move forward from reflection to action.

Name It

Look back through your answers. What stood out to you? What got you excited? What made you pause?

Choose It

Pick ONE thing you want to change. Just one to start with, not several. One thing with your one teen.

I want to change _____

Do It

Decide what that change will actually look like or sound like the next time you interact with your teen. What will you do? When will you do it?

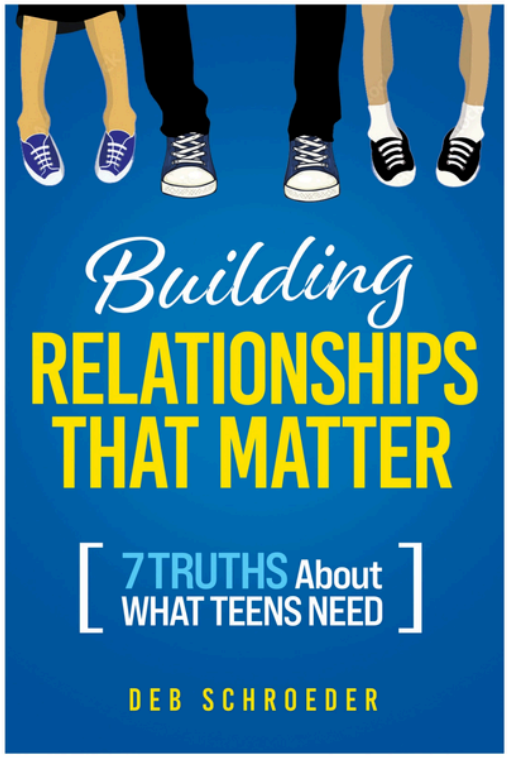
I will do _____

By _____

For example: Maybe you realized that when your one teen makes a choice you don't like, you panic a little. You start to worry. And you point out a past mistake to try to keep them from making it again. Your action might be to listen and intentionally NOT bring up the past. Or, you might choose to think of one thing you love about this teen.

Yes. One teen. One thing you can change. One action you can take. You've got this!

Want to Keep Going?



You've started by looking at one teen and what you can do differently in that relationship. But there's more to understand about what teens need and why.

In *Building Relationships That Matter*, I help you go deeper by exploring what teens need, how youth development connects to those needs, and the 7 Truths that guide you in building relationships that matter.

Book release date: TBD

Visit debtalkstruth.com or follow me on social media to stay up to date on the book release.

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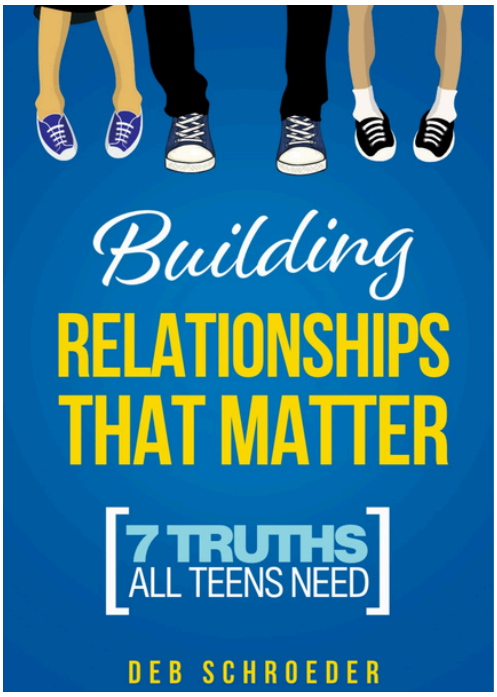

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