



STRENGTHENING

Bonds

A GUIDE TO HAVING EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR
TEENAGE SON

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INTRODUCTION

Hey, dear parents!

Are you ready to embark on an extraordinary journey of connection and understanding with your teenage son?

Can you picture you and your teenage son engaging in heart-to-heart conversations, laughter filling the air, and genuine understanding flowing effortlessly between you?

A solid parent-teen bond is essential for your son's growth and happiness, and it is our responsibility, as parents, to create an unbreakable connection with them. Among others, communication is a key player in the process.

Indeed, communicating with teenage boys can sometimes feel like unbundling a mysterious code.

The eye rolls, occasional monosyllabic responses, and difficulty in discussing sensitive topics might leave you scratching your head, wondering how to bridge the gap.

Hmm... I have been there.

But that's where 'Strengthening Bonds' comes in. Imagine this guide as your trusty map, guiding you through the unique terrain of parent-teen communication.

The tips in this book will help you kickstart navigating the challenges, discover powerful strategies, and build a bridge of understanding between you and your son.

With 'Strengthening Bonds', you'll gain insights, find evidence-based strategies, see real-life examples, and discover interactive tools that will empower you to adapt and thrive while communicating with your young man.

So, roll up your sleeves, and let's begin this adventure together. Get ready to unleash

the full potential of effective communication and forge an unbreakable bond with your teenage son.
Love,

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CHAPTER 1:

Navigating Parenting Challenges

The parenting maze!

As a parent of a teenage son, you're no stranger to the twists and turns that come with trying to communicate effectively. Most times, the turns feel unending, but let's explore the common challenges that parents face and shed light on the path ahead.

Identifying the Barrier

Have you ever initiated a conversation with your teenage son, and you're met with a monosyllabic response or, worse, a door slam? We get it; it can be frustrating, but have you ever tried to identify the problem when you try to communicate with them?

In my journey as a parent of teenagers, identifying and understanding some of these challenges helped me tailor my conversations appropriately, and I am sure you can get the same result as I did if you put your heart into it.

Some examples of these barriers are short or limited attention, mood swings and emotional imbalance, language differences, peer influence from the teen, overreaction, lack of active listening, and maybe a generational gap. Are you thinking about what is on my mind? Social media. That can also be a barrier from both ends, i.e., the parent or son.

The Impact of Adolescence

Adolescence is a period of transformation and discovery for your teenagers. Understanding how this phase affects your parent-teen relationship is like finding a secret treasure map. Empathy is key here, and by recognising the emotional rollercoaster he's on, you can respond with patience and understanding.



Proven Strategies for Success:

Here are some practical tips and actionable techniques to overcome those communication barriers and build resilience in your relationship:

- 1. Practice Active Listening:** Engage fully in conversations with your son, showing genuine interest in what he has to say. Put away distractions and maintain eye contact to let him know he has your undivided attention.
- 2. Validate His Feelings:** During heated discussions, avoid dismissing his emotions. Instead, acknowledge his feelings, even if you don't agree with them. Let him know that his emotions are valid and understood.
- 3. Choose the Right Timing:** Timing can be everything! Pick moments when both of you are relaxed and free from distractions to initiate important conversations. Avoid approaching sensitive topics during heated moments.
- 4. Use 'I' Statements:** When expressing your feelings or concerns, use 'I' statements to share your perspective without sounding accusatory. For example, say, *'I feel worried when you stay out late without letting me know'* instead of *'You always ignore my rules!'*
- 5. Embrace Humour:** Lighten the mood by incorporating humour into your conversations. A well-timed joke or a shared laugh can break down barriers and create a more comfortable atmosphere for open communication.

Further resources - <https://youtu.be/QI87Z54tDWU>, <https://youtu.be/pFKhOP2WyQ4>



CHAPTER 2: **Cultivating and Nurturing connection**

The heartbeat of your journey.

Effective communication fuels the unbreakable bond with teenagers. In this chapter, we will look at some tips that can help you form the connection that will stand the test of time.

The Art of Active Listening

Imagine a treasure chest overflowing with precious gems; that's what active listening is for your parent-teen relationship. Unlock this valuable skill, and you'll discover a world of understanding and mutual respect.

Being fully present, engaging wholeheartedly in your son's conversations, and truly hearing his thoughts and feelings while maintaining eye contact is important here.

When you are actively listening, you would be able to paraphrase, empathise, use and watch out for nonverbal cues, avoid judging or criticising, not jump to solutions and stay calm. And when you need more clarity, ask open-ended questions.

Modelling Healthy Emotional Expression

As the captain of this journey, you set the course. Your teenage son looks to you as a role model for emotional expression. By demonstrating healthy ways to express emotions, you'll empower him to navigate the waves of feelings that come with adolescence.

Here are a few tips to help you express your emotions in a healthy way:



- Be self-aware and understand your triggers
- Be open about your emotions. Feel free to communicate and share it with others.
- Label your emotions using words like 'I feel happy when ...' or 'I feel frustrated by...'
- Model healthy coping strategies.
- Resolve conflicts quickly and respectfully.
- Reinforce positive behaviour by modelling it.

Remember, modelling healthy emotional expression is an ongoing process that gets better with consistency.

Tackling Tough Topics with Grace

On this journey, we'll face some choppy waters. Tackling sensitive topics can be quite an adventure, and you must be able to navigate these treacherous waters gracefully. This extends from dating and peer pressure to academic challenges. You have to be able to approach these discussions with care and understanding, fostering a safe environment where your son feels free to share his thoughts.

A Judgment-Free Zone for Open Dialogue

Picture a warm island of trust, surrounded by waters of acceptance and non-judgment. That's the kind of space you want to create for open dialogue to thrive between you and your son. Learn the art of being a supportive listener, free from criticism and judgement, and you'll nurture a haven where your teenage son feels comfortable sharing his dreams, fears, and aspirations.



CHAPTER 3:

Understanding His World

The world of teenage boys is a realm filled with wonder, complexity, and unique perspectives. In this chapter, we'll embark on an enlightening exploration of the cognitive and emotional development of adolescents to help us understand their communication preferences so that you can gain invaluable insights for navigating the journey with your son.

The Adolescent Mind Unveiled

Imagine uncovering a hidden treasure map or a vast expanse of space. That's what understanding your son's cognitive and emotional development during adolescence feels like. Empathy and a good understanding of the transformative phase – the changes and challenges your son faces – will help you go through the uncharted waters of puberty with confidence.

Communication from His Perspective

Ever wonder how your teenage son prefers to communicate? Recognising his unique communication style and preferences might be a barrier breaker for your relationship. From deciphering his text messages to understanding his body language, you'll become fluent in the language of teenage boys. This newfound awareness will set the foundation for a deeper connection, making sure your messages reach his heart and yours.

Bridging the Generation Gap with Empathy

Navigating the generation gap can feel like sailing through rough seas, but with empathy as your anchor, you'll bridge the divide with grace – identifying with his experiences, validating his emotions, and strengthening your bond through your



understanding. Meet him where he is to create an unbreakable bond that stands the test of time.

With a little insight into his world, you can become a seasoned explorer of your teenage son's thoughts and emotions.



CHAPTER 4:

Quick Tips and Strategies for Success

Through my journey of parenting my sons, I have come to conclude that communication with teenage boys is not a one-size-fits-all strategy, but there are some basic principles and tips that, when intentionally implemented, can be life-changing.

Now, let's go a little deeper into some practical tools and strategies to help you create a stronger bond through effective communication with your teenage boy.

Sharpening Your Verbal Intelligence

The power of words! By honing your verbal intelligence, you'll be able to express yourself effectively and connect with your teenage son.

In the Boys2Men Institute at Joshua's Army, one of the intelligence models we teach is verbal intelligence, where we train the boys on how to intelligently communicate - things to pay attention to when communicating with anyone at any level.

A good place to start as parents is to start controlling your words. When you address tough topics, reflect on the things you say and the language you use, and if you are not sure of how it makes others feel, ask for feedback.

Mastering the Art of Active Listening

Listening goes beyond nodding and giving solutions. In fact, when you listen actively, there is usually no need to provide replies or solutions to the boy. Listening with your heart, mind, and ears is a skill that will leave a lasting impact on your son's heart.

When my older son was 14, we were having a conversation, and in the middle of it, he said, 'Mum, you are not listening.' What? But I was (or so I thought).



I had to get it right because one very important thing to me is my relationship with my sons. While I thought about it, I found myself in a class where active listening was a model, and it was an answer to prayers.

In the process, I learnt to be present and focused when they are talking to me, show empathy, and control my body language. I avoid thinking of a solution or what to say as much as possible, and once they are done, I paraphrase to be sure I heard them correctly and offer my feedback or simply say, 'Can I think over this, please?' or 'Should we talk about it by XYZ time?'

Here is a short teaching I did on active listening for further reference -

<https://youtu.be/QI87Z54tDWU>

Empathy

This is the golden key to connection. The first time I had a good understanding of empathy was when one of my boys was reported for what he did not do. When I spoke to him about it, he asked me a question that sent me on a quest.

'Mum, do you think I can do that? Can you imagine how I feel knowing I haven't done this and everyone that heard of me probably thinks I did it?'

As simple as that statement sounded, it got me thinking about how he felt. I put myself in his shoes, and it wasn't a good feeling for me. That was my driving force for making sure my son was not only vindicated but apologised to.

Have you ever tried to put yourself in your son's shoes to understand his experiences, dreams, and fears? By embracing empathy, you'll create a safe space where your son can confidently express his emotions and seek refuge.



Boundaries with Love

Every relationship needs a steady compass of boundaries to guide the parties through responsibly.

By setting loving and healthy boundaries, you cultivate an environment of trust and respect, enabling your son to explore the vast expanse of growth.

The book *Boundaries with Teenagers* by Dr. John Townsend might be a good one to read if you are struggling with setting boundaries with your teens.

Building a Foundation of Trust

Think of trust as a lighthouse, showing the way for your parent-teen relationship, whether it's smooth sailing or rough waters.

A few years ago, an adult in school asked my teenage son a question about something he was struggling with, and the boy asked her if he 'could trust her not to tell anyone,' and she said yes. Although she meant well by not keeping the boy's struggle to herself, she didn't keep her word, and as far as the boy was concerned, 'she lied, and she was not to be trusted.' Children hear your words but see and relate with your actions more. It is what you do that stays with them, not your intentions. To build a foundation of trust, be open-minded, express unconditional love, be honest and transparent, be consistent in your actions, respect your word and promises, and follow through on consequences.



CHAPTER 5: **Initiating Meaningful Conversations**

Let's explore some ways you can establish open and heartfelt communication channels and see how you can build unbreakable bonds with your teenage boys.

Family Rituals (Uniting Through Traditions)

Family rituals are the special and meaningful activities or routines that families engage in together on a regular basis. These rituals hold significant emotional value and play an essential role in creating a sense of unity, bonding, and identity within the family. Family rituals can be as simple as having dinner together every evening, going for a walk in the park on weekends, or celebrating birthdays and holidays in a particular way.

These rituals often involve shared experiences, traditions, and customs that are passed down from generation to generation. The consistency and repetition of these rituals foster a sense of security, stability, and belonging for all family members.

Family rituals not only strengthen the emotional connection between family members but also provide a framework for open communication and support. They create opportunities for family members to come together, share experiences, express their feelings, and create lasting memories.

Whether big or small, family rituals contribute to the family's culture, values, and identity, helping to form a cohesive and loving unit. They play a vital role in building a positive family environment and enhancing the overall well-being and happiness of each family member.



Fun and Bonding (Activities That Spark Connection)

One of my core values is fun. It creates the atmosphere of freedom and laughter that I love to see people around me enjoy. Whatever fun means to you and your family, there has to be time for it.

Fun and bonding in the family are essential elements that contribute to a positive and thriving family dynamic. When families engage in fun and bonding activities together, they strengthen their emotional connections and create lasting memories.

Spend time together, create happy memories, engage in a family member's hobby, laugh, and let the child in you find expression and be playful.

Ultimately, the presence of fun in the family strengthens the love and connection between family members, creating a nurturing and supportive environment where everyone can thrive, grow together, and be free to express themselves.

Skillfully Asking the Right Questions (The power of a well-placed question)

Skillfully probing without intruding is a valuable tool for communicating effectively with your son. Asking the right questions is a powerful communication tool that can foster meaningful conversations and deepen connections with your teenage son. It involves using thoughtful and insightful inquiries to elicit valuable information, encourage self-reflection, and show genuine interest in his thoughts and feelings.

Ask open-ended questions in an empathetic way, avoid judging, be ready to listen, and follow up with feedback where necessary when you ask questions. Adapt your question to the child's age, interests, and experiences. Use the 'sandwich' style where you commend, tell, and commend when you give feedback. And while at it, let the boys see and feel you are genuinely curious and need to understand.



Skillfully asking the right questions can lead to rich and rewarding conversations that promote understanding, empathy, and trust in relationships. It allows you to connect with your son on a deeper level and opens the door for personal growth and meaningful exchanges of ideas and experiences.

Further resources - Family Motion: 52 Weeks of Living, Learning & Laughing. Available

on Amazon https://www.amazon.co.uk/Family-Motion-Living-Learning-Laughing/dp/B0848WD1H4/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=bukola+jolugbo&qid=1691153316&sr=8-1



CHAPTER 6:

Final Note

We have been talking about knowing how to communicate with your teenage son; now, let's look at when to speak and possible things to talk about when you have established a foundation for effective communication.

Faith-based Talks: If you are a person of faith, be open about your faith, your struggles, and your wins. Your son will learn to trust God from your life experiences. Avoid painting God and allow them to experience Him for themselves.

Peer Pressure and Relationships: Address issues related to peer pressure, friendships, and romantic relationships. Offer guidance on making healthy choices in these areas. Discuss their friendships and social interactions. Address issues related to peer pressure, healthy friendships, and handling conflicts with peers.

Personal Values and Ethics: Engage in discussions about personal values and ethics. Encourage your sons to think critically about what is important to them and how to set and respect boundaries.

Encouraging and Supportive Conversations: Offer praise and encouragement for their achievements and efforts. Show them that you believe in their abilities and support their goals.

Emotional Well-being: Talk to your teenage boys about their emotions and feelings. Encourage them to express their emotions and let them know it's okay to talk about what they are going through – the good and the not so good moments.

Academic Progress: Discuss schoolwork, academic goals, and any challenges they may be facing. Offer support and guidance to help them maximise their academic potential and achieve their goals.

Health and Wellness: Talk about their physical health, nutrition, exercise, and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Personal Responsibility: This is a very important one. Discuss the importance of taking responsibility for their actions and choices. Teach them about accountability and consequences.

Decision Making: Guide your sons in making thoughtful and informed decisions. Encourage them to consider the potential outcomes of their choices and how they can affect the things that matter to them.



Future Plans: Talk about their interests, passions, and future goals. Help them explore potential career paths and educational opportunities.

Technology and Online Safety: Discuss responsible internet use, online safety, and the potential risks associated with social media and technology. They might not be as careful as you are and at the same time feel they know it all. You've got to be patient with them.

Sexual Health and Relationships: Address topics related to sexual health, consent, and healthy relationships. Provide accurate information and honestly answer any questions they may have.

Financial Literacy: Talk about money management, budgeting, and the value of saving and responsible spending.

Safety and Boundaries: Discuss personal safety, setting boundaries, and recognising potentially risky situations.

Critical Thinking: Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Discuss current events and social issues and encourage them to think independently.

Family Values: Talk about family values, traditions, and the importance of respect and support within the family unit. If you think there is a gap here, it is never too late to start identifying your family values and what should define you as a family.

Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem: Help boost their self-confidence and self-esteem by acknowledging their strengths and accomplishments. Rather than condemn their mistakes, teach them ways to learn from and maximise them.

Mental Health: Discuss the importance of mental health and well-being. Encourage them to seek help if they are struggling emotionally. Their mental health is as important as their physical health.

Respectful Communication: Model and encourage respectful communication within the family and with others. They say respect is a two-way street, and I'd like to add that as the adult on the street, you are responsible for modelling what the street should look and feel like.

Community Involvement: Discuss the value of giving back to the community and being involved in volunteer activities.

Coping Skills: Talk about healthy coping strategies for managing stress and challenging emotions.

Media and News Literacy: Discuss media literacy and how to critically evaluate information from various sources.



Consent and Boundaries in Relationships: Talk about consent, respect, and healthy boundaries in romantic relationships.

Drug and substance: Educate them about the effects, social implications, law, and side effects. Be open about why they would want to go into it, why they should avoid it, and how they could avoid it.

These conversations should be ongoing and adapted to the specific needs and interests of your teenage boy. The key is to maintain open lines of communication, be non-judgmental, and provide a supportive and understanding environment where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns.

Remember that each teenage boy is unique, and the way they communicate may vary. Be flexible in your approach and adapt your communication style based on their needs, preferences, and levels.

For self-learning resources for your son on success, you can get my book, MANTRA: Ten Success Principles for the Teenage Boys. It is available on Amazon -

https://www.amazon.co.uk/MANTRA-Ten-Success-Principles-Teenage/dp/B099BWTBS2/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=bukola+jolugbo&qid=1691153053&sr=8-2



REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Let's explore some common scenarios involving teenage boys and how to handle them with communication and support:

1. Handling Emotional Outbursts: Staying Calm and Supportive

Scenario: Your teenage son comes home after a challenging day at school and seems upset. He starts expressing his frustrations with anger, raising his voice, and becoming visibly agitated.

Communication Approach:

- **Stay Calm:** Remain composed and avoid reacting with anger or frustration.
- **Listen Attentively:** Allow him to vent and express his feelings without interrupting.
- **Validate His Emotions:** Acknowledge his feelings and let him know it's okay to feel upset.
- **Offer Support:** Offer a listening ear and reassure him that you are there to support him.
- **Problem-Solving Together:** If appropriate, work together to find constructive solutions to the challenges he faced.

2. Negotiating Rules and Chores: Finding Common Ground

Scenario: You and your teenage son have different perspectives on household rules and chores. He believes some rules are too strict and that chores are unfair, leading to disagreements.



Communication Approach:

- **Empathise and Understand:** Listen to your son's viewpoint and understand his concerns.
- **Explain Your Perspective:** Share your reasons behind the rules and chores, providing context.
- **Find Compromise:** Look for common ground and be open to adjusting the rules or chore responsibilities.
- **Involve Him in Decision-Making:** Include your son in discussions about family rules and chores to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

3. Addressing Academic Pressure: Encouraging and Supporting Your Son

Scenario: Your teenage son is feeling overwhelmed with academic pressure, facing exams and assignments. He appears stressed and worried about his performance.

Communication Approach:

- **Show Empathy:** Acknowledge the stress he is experiencing and let him know it's normal to feel that way.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Create a safe space for him to talk about his concerns and fears related to academics.
- **Offer Support:** Let him know you are there to support him through challenges and encourage him to reach out for help if needed.
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Remind him that his best effort is what matters most and encourage a healthy balance between academics and self-care.



4. Coping with Peer Pressure: Providing Guidance and Understanding

Scenario: Your teenage son is facing peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours or make choices that go against his values.

Communication Approach:

- **Be Non-Judgmental:** Avoid criticising or lecturing him; instead, be understanding and empathetic.
- **Validate His Feelings:** Acknowledge the challenges he faces in navigating peer pressure.
- **Reinforce Values:** Remind him of the family values and the importance of making choices aligned with his beliefs.
- **Provide Guidance:** Offer suggestions on how to handle peer pressure and role-play different scenarios together.

Effective communication, empathy, and support are key elements in nurturing a strong parent-teen relationship and guiding your son through the ups and downs of adolescence. I hope these scenarios and approaches have given you insights into how you can handle some of the real-life experiences.



For further help with navigating life with your teenage son, feel free to reach out to me via email - info@bukolajolugbo.org

For further resources for parents of teenage boys, visit my [YouTube Channel](#).

You can also join my weekly teaching emails by joining my mailing list [here](#).

Request for more information about our training programs for boys [here](#).

ABOUT THE BOOK

The tips in this book will help you kickstart navigating the challenges, discover powerful strategies, and build a bridge of understanding between you and your son. With 'Strengthening Bonds', you'll gain insights, find evidence-based strategies, see real-life examples, and discover interactive tools that will empower you to adapt and thrive while communicating with your young man.

So, roll up your sleeves, and let's begin this adventure together. Get ready to unleash the full potential of effective communication and forge an unbreakable bond with your teenage son.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bukola Jolugbo, fondly referred to as Kiki, is the founder of Joshua's Army, a movement devoted to building high-quality relationships between fathers and sons. She works with Christian professional parents to raise world-class men, leaders, husbands and fathers.

She is a trainer, facilitator and host of various family-oriented events to foster healthy and functional families with a keen interest in teenage boys. She brings that expertise as a Process Improvement Engineer to bear in her work with boys and their parents to create life-changing processes that promote healthy family environments for the development of boys into world-class leaders. Kiki is also an exceptional consultant in the UK Public Sector as a User Experience Analyst. She coaches and mentors people from the Black Ethnic Minority group on maximising their soft skills and technical knowledge for career development and progression.

She's married and has two amazing young men.

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