

Am I Walking My Talk With Young People?

If you're an adult, ask yourself these questions as you go about more intentionally interacting with young people, realizing that what you do and how you do it may mean more to them than what you say. If you're a young person, read these questions and ask yourself whether the adults in your life do these things for you.

- t Do I ask young people what's important to them and take their responses seriously?
- t Do I meet my own responsibilities to myself, my work, my personal growth, and my family and friends?
- t Do I demonstrate caring and honesty by taking actions like volunteering, speaking up when I see someone treating a young person disrespectfully, or telling the truth even when it is difficult?
- t Do I invite young people to share my interests or to join me in a service activity?
- t Do I show interest in young people's activities by attending poetry readings at the local youth center, going to recitals, or seeing basketball games at the nearby middle school?
- t Do I applaud when young people speak up passionately for what they believe in?
- t Do I listen attentively when young people talk? Do I validate their feelings and help them move through the feelings to wise decisions?
- t Have I asked a young person how he or she got named? Have I shared how my name was chosen?
- t Have I asked a young person to "translate" the lyrics of his or her favorite song for me and help me understand its appeal?
- t Do I model creative problem-solving attitudes when I have challenges in my own life?
- t In my work and play with young people, do I encourage and help them to be leaders and decision makers?
- t Do I offer to just spend time with a young person?
- t Do I question my assumptions about the "problem kid" on the block or ask myself whether there are enough caring adults in her or his life? Am I one of those caring adults? Do I try to talk with that young person, get to know his or her name, smile, and wave when I drive by rather than scowl or avoid eye contact?
- t Do I listen to young people's hopes, dreams, and concerns without judging or criticizing?
- t Do I honestly acknowledge my own fears and doubts, and show how I seek support and care for myself in order to address those fears and doubts?
- t Do I give young people positive feedback when I see them trying hard to work at a problem or doing something kind for something else?
- t Do I accept the uniqueness and even quirkiness of young people, just as I want others to accept mine?