

Strategies for connecting with your teen with High Functioning Depression

- Try talking at nighttime when the teen is in bed and the room is fairly dark. Make some bodily contact, like placing hand on the teen's arm or foot. Remember the point isn't for the teen to share feelings, the point is for the teen to know you are present and will check in with them consistently. It may take a few silent nights before the teen works up the confidence to share his/her deep feelings and thoughts.
- Ask open ended questions that don't feel pressuring. Ex.: "Can you share with me some things that may be adding to your workload at school?", "How are friends", "I'm just going to sit here for a little and listen to whatever you want to tell me, even if it's nothing at all."
- Try joining in on your teen's preferred activity. This may look like watching him/her play a video game, watching a show together, or looking at something he/she found on the internet he/she found interesting. You want to meet your teen where him/her are at.
- Go for a walk; the best conversations can happen without the pressure of eye contact. Ask some casual questions to invite conversation such as: "What did you do at lunch?", "what are some things that have happened you've enjoyed this week?". As the teen begins to open up, try some open ended questions. Again, keep in mind, the goal isn't for the parent to be a detective, the goal is for the teen to see that you are present for him or her and that you are showing you care.
- Take pressure off whenever you can. Keep in mind the teen's automatic response is self criticism, even if they don't show it. Ex.: "I see you a change in your English grades. Can you tell me more about that?" "I know cheerleader try outs are coming up, what are your expectations for yourself? If you don't place on the team, how can I be there for you?" "I see you're struggling in science right now. I want you to know I care about you doing your best. Let me know what I can do to support you"
- Helpful statements to connect to struggling teen from presentation:
 - "I have been feeling concerned about you lately."
 - "Recently, I have noticed differences in you and wondered how you are doing."
 - "I wanted to check in with you because you have seemed pretty down lately."
 - "You are not alone in this. I am here for you."
 - "I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and I want to help."
 - "You are important to me. Your life is important to me."
 - "Tell me something in this moment I can do to help you."
 - "No feeling is permanent, but every feeling is valid."

