

# NON-THREATENING APPROACH TO TALK WITH TEENS

## **I CARE**

Take the time to begin the discussion or conversation letting the child know you care about them. You can use the statement, "You have a lot of potential," or say something that demonstrates you care like, "I think you are a great kid," or "I care about your health and safety." This helps the child understand that the purpose of the discussion is to focus on areas that concern you without them thinking you are judging him/her negatively.

## **I SEE**

This is where you describe the child's behaviors that concern you. Be careful to speak in a nonjudgmental manner. Some examples include: "I see your grades are dropping," "I see you are frustrated with me." Statements like these should center around the behaviors which are observable and specific. Judgmental statements cause a person to feel defensive and stop the listening process.

## **I FEEL**

This is your opportunity to express concern and frustration about the behaviors you are seeing. Some examples include, "I feel frustrated about..." or "I'm concerned when I see..."

## **LISTEN**

This is the most important component of the process. Like any conversation or discussion, people need to express themselves and be heard. Often, a child will openly problem-solve or offer an explanation as to why he/she is behaving in ways that concern you. Sometimes a child will need time to process the approach by briefly working through the process again. If so, go back to the first three steps before you move on. On occasion, a child will resist this approach. You should look at this as one of the many approaches it may take to make a difference with him/her. Express your concern and provide him/her with an open invitation to talk later.

## **I WANT**

This is the time to be reflective with a child about some of the things you heard him/her say. He/she needs to hear you say supportive statements that will address the behaviors of concern you described and demonstrate that you understand the perspective he/she shared with you. Some examples include: "I want you to be successful in school," or "I want you to take a different approach with your homework."

## **I WILL**

This is the time in the discussion to express to a child what you intend to do to follow up on the conversation. By expressing a concern, it involves your willingness to help process a solution. Statements made here help him/her understand you are there to support and guide him/her to be successful in the solution. Some examples include: "I will help you develop a plan to improve," or "I'm willing to talk to you again tomorrow when you have had an opportunity to think about what we discussed."