

## What To Do When Things Go Wrong: Stick to the “Basics”

by Sue Blaney

Do you ever feel like nothing is going right? Many families go through rough times when problems, pressures and challenges build up and make you feel like life is out of control. It can be scary when problems loom large. Whether the problems you face are from outside influences – like the economy or work – or whether you are having a bad spell with your family relationships, it is best to stay grounded and focus on the basics at times like this. And it's more important than ever to keep talking with your teenager.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Treat your teen with respect.** Sometimes when parents are feeling fearful or challenged you may withdraw or lash out without even being aware of it, so be sure to manage your behavior. You don't need to reveal the details of your problems to your teens, but you can respect their level of maturity and talk with them about what's going on. Teenagers are resilient and most will step up when it's needed. Let them know you need their assistance, if only in their helpful attitude.
- **Listen with your head and your heart.** Allow your teens to share what is on their minds, and listen for the underlying emotions. When those feelings are identified and talked about you can find ways to support one another.
- **Be comfortable exercising your authority.** Even if you are feeling vulnerable you need to remain the parent in charge. Don't allow your confidence to waiver in your parenting.
- **Get help when you need it.** Whether you need professional input to help you manage your family dynamics, or just input from a friend, don't try to do this all by yourself. Make sure you have some outside input to keep you thinking clearly.
- **Allow others to play a role. It really does take a village to raise a child.** If you are having trouble communicating with your teenager, appeal to a close friend, relative, teacher or coach who has a good relationship with your teen. Encourage your teenager to develop and nurture relationships with other trusted adults.

All families face challenges at times. Remember there isn't a magic potion or special secret that is out of your reach....the solutions to family issues are in your reach and you'll keep an even keel when you stay focused on the basics.