**UNDERSTANDING TEENS**

***by Pam Staver***

***If woman are from Venus and men are from Mars—***

***where do teenagers come from?***

We’d be completely out of touch if we

were not aware of what the media is

screaming about our teens. In the October

1995 issue of Time magazine, statistics

were printed from the Carnegle Council

on Adolescent Development, taken from

a report titled *Great Transitions*. The statistics

were alarming:The rate of suicide among

young adolescents increased 120 percent

between 1980 and 1992. The firearm

homicide rate for 10 to 14 year olds more

than doubled between 1985 and 1992.

Two-thirds of eighth-graders report that

they have tried alcohol and 28 percent

say that they have been drunk at least

once. Pregnancy rates for girls younger

than 15 rose 4.1 percent between 1980

and 1988.Can we change the statistics?

**Spend Time with Them**

It really is impossible to have a good

relationship with teenagers if you don’t

spend time with them. Don’t expect teens

to automatically think you’re cool and

trustworthy. You’ll really have to prove it.

Accept them for who they are, and show

them that you are genuinely concerned

about them. Then, they’ll begin accepting

you for who you are.Look past the way

they dress or wear their hair. Learn their

talk, it is sometimes different than ours.

If we are going to get their attention,

we’ve got to be non-intimidating and

willing to meet them where they are.

**Listen More Than You Talk**

When you listen, you have the unique

opportunity of learning something you

quite possibly did not know. Whatever it

takes, learn to be a listener to teenagers.

It’s the only way to figure them out. Offer

up your words of wisdom when it’s

necessary, but mostly, just listen.

**Say Yes More Than You Say No**

Figure out what is and what is not

negotiable. Hairstyle is negotiable, drugs

are not. If everything is an issue, then

everything you say is ignored. As much as

I’d love for my two teenagers to keep a

clean room, a messy room doesn’t

endanger their lives; therefore a clean

room is negotiable. Getting into a car

with someone who has been drinking is

non-negotiable.

The most important thing we can do for

kids is to help them value their lives.

Being healthy and fit will put them in

touch with their bodies, increase their

self-esteem and help them to establish a

desire to set personal goals.

Pam Staver is the author of the book *The*

*Magic of Motivating Kids to Move* and has

been featured in seven fitness videos for

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