What being a tween means

- This is the age when children are trying to separate from their parents.
- Not little kids anymore yet not teenagers either -- an in between stage.
- Friendships become more important and friends more influential
- Pre-adolescent phase so approaching puberty – hormonal changes/moodiness
- Crushes can develop
- Self-consciousness about appearance and body image
- Discovering who they are
- Multiple stressors of homework, testing, lack of sleep, schedules overbooked with activities
- Testing of limits
- Belief that parents are stupid, embarrassing and appear to want limited interaction with them especially in front of peers
- Parents may think their tween does not need their support as much as did when they were younger and their tween may say "butt out" but in fact they need the support of their parents!

How do I get my tween to open up to me?

- Be a neutral listener
- Listen before reacting
- Be a fact gatherer
- Think discipline second
- Acknowledge your feelings but don't let interfere with listening with an open mind
- Encourage expressions of all feelings
- Explain why what your child did upset you AFTER you have fully understood the full meaning behind why they did what they did

Not helpful responses

- Blaming your child
- Disagreeing with your child
- Giving advice prematurely (when child just looking for empathy)
- Pretending the situation does not exist because the parent feels uncomfortable with their child feeling upset

Helpful responses

- Ask questions
- Get details
- Show an interest in understanding what's going on from your child's perspective

- Don't jump to conclusion because may be a deeper issue
- Keep asking "Is there anything else upsetting you?"

When your child of any age really talks to you just listen and keep listening! That in and of itself is the best response. If you listen well, your child will be far more open to hear your view and your advice I promise!

Signs depression vs typical tween moodiness

Possible signs of depression or a deeper issue is when your tween has symptoms that interfere with their daily life…

- Appetite – decrease or overeating
- Sleep – sleeping too much or too little – difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Mood – moody with friends, can't enjoy their friendships
- Decreased concentration
- Academically – grades decline
- Feel worthless – low body image
- Obsession over body image
- Angry most of the time
- Stomachaches, headaches or body aches without clear physical cause

These are signs to involve a mental health professional.

Sometimes even if a tween is not experiencing a depression but just typical tween angst a neutral person like a therapist can be incredibly helpful because sometimes emotion gets in the way of the relationship.

It's incredibly rewarding for me when I see an angry tween and an angry parent and after just a few sessions their relationship is so much closer. You can try what I've suggested above and if things are not progressing I would recommend you find a therapist to help. Limit setting can be difficult for parents and a neutral therapist can be incredibly useful.