Real Talk for Teens:

If you're like many parents, you may find it difficult to communicate with your teens. According to Dr. Laura Offutt, author of the blog, Real Talk for Teens, teens may not tell adults things because they want to try to figure out how to solve it themselves. "This is a normal part of maturation," says Dr. Offutt.

She offers the following tips for encouraging teen communication:

- Keep calm no matter what the question is!
- Ask if they are coming to you to “vent” or for advice; then abide by that.
- You don’t have to know everything! You can tell them you will look together for accurate answers.
- Help them figure out how to address their own problems and issues – resist the urge to take it over yourself.

If your teen asks a shocking question, Dr. Offutt suggests that you try saying, “Hmmm, I’m thinking of the best way to answer your question. Just because I don’t have an answer right away doesn’t mean you asked a bad question. “ If you feel very uncomfortable, you can say so. “We’re only human,” says Dr. Offutt.

Dr. Offutt also recommends having a group of reference resources handy. Some good resources for teens are NIDA for Teens and TeenHealth.org.

In her medical practice, Dr. Offutt sees countless patients whose medical problems can be traced to poor decision-making in their teen years. Some of these issues included STDs and accidental pregnancies, substance abuse, poor diet, lack of exercise, and cancer and emphysema caused by smoking, which started in the teen years. According to Dr. Offut, teens frequently turn to their friends or the internet to search for answers to their health questions. Realizing the need for teens to have access to complete, non-technical medical information, Dr. Offut started a blog, Real Talk for Teens. No question is off limits! Some of the topics she addresses in her blog are: bullying; stress; self-esteem; alcohol poisoning; depression; birth control; dating abuse; concussions; nutrition; smoking; e-cigarettes; sleep; periods; distracted driving; suicide; cutting; HPV; drugs; anorexia, and tanning beds. ***Check it out!***