A night or two before a parent is leaving town on a business trip, or a teen is returning to his or her other home after visiting a noncustodial parent, go out together for a special night of fun.

♦ **Dinner**: the teen should pick their favorite restaurant (within financial limits, of course!). Don’t waste this time! Spend it talking about how you will stay in touch and upcoming activities you will do together.

♦ **Special event**: after dinner (or before) pick something that you really enjoy doing together, and do it! This time will be important for both of you. Just have fun.

♦ **Commitment**: at the end of the evening, make a promise to each other to do something specific to keep in touch while you are apart. It could be regularly writing an e-mail or a letter or making a phone call.

♦ **Symbol**: use something as a symbolic gesture of love and comfort. For instance, a parent could buy a piece of jewelry with two pieces that are meant to fit together – you and your teen keep one part in remembrance of the other. Or parent and teen can give each other a special card or video that expresses how you feel about one another.

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**How will this activity promote the parent-teen relationship?**

Spending this time together the night before a period that you will be apart will show the importance each holds in the other’s life.

Using dinner for a conversation about what you each will be doing while apart and how you can best handle the separation may allow you to open up to each other like never before by showing a willingness to listen and talk.

This time together can help to create a special bond to hold your hearts together while you are apart.

A concrete and meaningful gift will remind you of each other while you are apart.

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**Keep this in mind . . .**

- Be ready and willing to talk about the “tough” subjects.
- Make sure to spend a lot of time listening to each other’s concerns.
- Neither of you should dominate this activity; do what is fun and best for all of you.
- Don’t make any promises you do not fully intend to keep . . . and make sure to keep them!