What families need is more time to talk, but there are many things in our hectic lives today that hinder us to do so. One way to create this special time to talk may be to work on a puzzle together.

♦ Find a place in your home where a puzzle could be worked on, over a period of time without having to be moved or being in the way of normal family functions.

♦ If necessary, set up a table in this spot; make sure the table is large enough to accommodate the puzzles you and your family will put together.

♦ Start slow by getting a smaller, simpler puzzle for the first time; as the family’s interest grows, more difficult puzzles can be attempted.

♦ This activity does not need to be planned, with a set date and time (though such planning may work for some families, such as making one night a week “Puzzle Night”); rather, the main point of this activity is to draw family members together, when they are “bored” and have nothing else to do.

♦ It may be that a unscheduled regular time will be used; such as, some evenings after dinner, the family may find themselves together at the puzzle table.

How will this activity promote the parent-teen relationship?

Sitting together at a puzzle table and working on a project like this may be relaxing enough to talk about topics that are often overlooked or avoided. Or, new topics may come up that you have never discussed before.

Try to create a quiet and relaxed atmosphere when putting the puzzle together. This may help to teach patience and persistence. Also, family members may stay calm when talking about “explosive” topics by providing time to collect one’s thoughts before sharing them.

Even if little “talking” takes place when you work on puzzles, just being together is a good thing. Focus on enjoying the shared activity rather than forcing conversation.

Try this . . .

• Instead of forcing family members to participate, try just quietly working on the puzzle on your own for a while and see how many will eventually join you.

• In order to use this strategy, the puzzle table should be put up in a spot where others can see it and become interested.