

Life with a Teenager



Please contact us on 0845 090 8044 for other leaflet formats e.g. large print, audio, another language or through discussion.

Introduction

Self-esteem, role models and growing up

Parents are often worried that their children at this age seem desperate to grow up before their time. Girls might start wearing grown up clothes, experimenting with make-up or seem to be obsessed with celebrity role models. Boys also become heavily influenced by role models and begin to grunt rather than talk.

Your child is finding ways to express their identity and independence. But they may be nervous and frightened of their grown-up image and it might seem to you that they are acting grown up without knowing what they are doing.

Puberty

Puberty marks the move from being a child to being an adult. It's a time when the body changes as it becomes sexually mature. It can be frightening and exciting for both boys and girls, and it is important that they understand what is happening to them and why. Changing hormones, pressure from friends and the latest trends can cause mood swings and tantrums.

Parenting at home and away

If you don't live with your child it can be pretty tough going at times, especially if there are any left over feelings with your ex-partner. Even if you think it would be best if you stayed out of the way in almost all cases it is better to maintain contact (unless there has been violence or sexual abuse).

Step-parents

Step-parents have a difficult time cut out for them – first of all they're not sure where their authority lies, secondly they may be resented by the stepchildren. The parent is also in a difficult situation, trying to balance the needs of the teenager with the needs of the new partner.

Tips to help

- Keep an open mind and listen to their point of view.
- Change the way you talk to them. If they only ever hear nagging they will stop listening. A chat before they go out, or disappear to their room can make a real difference.
- Decide when to stand firm, when to negotiate and when to let go. Your concerns about drugs and sex are more important than your feelings about the clothes they choose to wear. Your children need to know this.
- Agree a bottom line with your partner or other carers and stick to it.
- Understand why they may be behaving badly. They may be moody, angry or aggressive because they can't put their feelings into words.
- Don't take it personally. Teenagers often hit out at the people they most love and trust. This isn't because they hate you, but because they feel confused, stressed and uncertain.
- Remember what it was like to be a teenager. Did you fight, argue with your parents about staying out late and what you wore? It is all part of developing a separate identity, they need to show the world that they are growing up and are not an extension of you.
- Teenagers need love. Despite the cool and distant image, they are still in need of care and attention. Most things about their world are changing; don't let your love be one of them.
- Teenagers need privacy. They constantly worry about their looks, their bodies and the strange feelings and thoughts they are experiencing, and need time to sort things out for themselves. Build up trust and show you respect their privacy and they will tell you more.
- Keep up to date. If you know what they are dealing with you could earn their respect.

Further help

Frank

Web: www.talktofrank.com

Tel: 0800 776600

Relate

Web: www.relate.org.uk

Tel: 0300 100 1234

Parentline Plus

Web: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

www.gotateenager.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 2222

Respect Yourself

www.respectyourself.info/

Practical Parenting Advice

Web: www.practicalparent.org.uk

If you are looking for any further information or advice for your family the Family Information Service can help you. We offer a free and impartial information and signposting service for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-20 on a range of topics such as; childcare, benefits, health, leisure and much more. If you don't know who to ask, ask the Family Information Service!

Tel: 0845 090 8044 or 01926 742274

Email: fis@warwickshire.gov.uk

Web: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis

