

## Parenting Adolescents

Being the parent of an adolescent can be a difficult and confusing role. It is a normal and healthy process for a teenager to struggle with their own feelings as they begin to figure out how to separate from their parents whilst navigating their path to adulthood. This process can be characterized by struggle and conflict between parent and teenager. You can, however take steps to reduce this conflict and encourage your teenager's personal development as he or she moves through this complex life stage.

It may be helpful to keep the following points in mind:

- Never forget that your teenager is no longer a child. A teenager who is treated like a child (even if they are behaving that way) is likely to become resentful of your parenting style and further avoid interactions with you.
- Become aware of the way that the needs of a teenager differ from that of a child and treat your teenager accordingly.
- Remember that learning from experiences, mistakes and successes is an essential part of the journey of adolescence.
- Try to foster a relationship which incorporates discussing experiences, both positive and negative, with your teenager, rather than focusing on what your teenager should have done to avoid getting it wrong. By doing this, rather than focusing on teaching, your teenager is much more likely to listen and engage with you and will subsequently learn via this process.
- Spend time sharing activities that you enjoy together; ensure that not all of your interactions revolve around what your teenager has done wrong (even if they are making a lot of mistakes).
- Establish clear rules regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Comment on and notice respectful behaviour; ignore behaviour that is annoying but with which you think you can live; and reinforce clear consequences of disrespectful behaviour.
- Parenting teenagers can be stressful and may put pressure on your relationship with your partner. Ensure you take steps to look after this relationship; this is one of the best things you can do for your teenager.

- If your teenager wants to have less to do with you and your family, allow them the space they need. Make plans as to how you will enjoy your own time and make the most of the time that they do want to spend with you. Try not to take it personally and remember that this is a normal part of being a teenager and the separation process.
- Be sensitive to your teenager's physical development. Most teenagers are very self-conscious about their appearance and the way their body is changing. If you are going to make comments ask them if they are comfortable for you to do so and respect the response you are given.
- If the going gets rough, back off. Don't allow disrespectful behaviour, but give your teenager some space and allow them learn from their mistakes. Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor.

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