



## **TOP TIPS for Parenting Teenagers!**

Teenagers can be challenging!! This is normal and is part of the progression into adulthood. Between the ages of approx. 12 – 19 years your child will be in a period of transition; a trainee adult. Their brains are changing and rewiring rapidly and their bodies are growing and developing and this can be tough for them. Research now shows that the brain isn't fully developed until the age of 25 so it's important to understand that even once a young person reaches 20 that they still aren't fully developed adults.

Being a teenager is tough now with the advances in technology/ social media and an increase in the expectations we have of them both academically and emotionally. Emotional wellbeing is being impacted by this and increasing amounts of young people are experiencing mental health issues, especially anxiety and low mood. It's important for us as parents to learn how to support their emotional needs/ wellbeing and guide them through these difficult years.

It is very common for teenagers to start to challenge the rules/ boundaries and become less cooperative. Friends will become their main focus and influence and they may start to pull away a bit from the family and spend more time in their bedroom/ out of the house. Boys may spend more time on computers/ games consoles (and headsets!). Girls may spend a lot of time on TikTok and Facetime/ House party etc. This is all very normal behaviour. They will, however, still need advice and guidance from you about a range of issues e.g education, friendships/ relationships, online safety, moral/ ethical judgements etc and will still need a balance of love and boundaries to keep them emotionally and physically safe.

The key is keeping your relationship with your teenager as strong and as positive as you can. This will make all the difference when they are displaying challenging and defiant behaviour or when they are experiencing difficult times!

Try the following for a calmer/ more cooperative relationship with your teen!

- Spend time with your teenager – they may moan and groan about this but they secretly still need this. Ask them to choose an activity or just go for a walk or a drive together or play sport etc. Maybe have a games/ film night or spend time with another family who also have teenagers
- Listen to your teenager – do less talking and more active listening. Put your phone down/ minimise any distractions and give them your undivided attention if you can. Accept/ consider that the time they want to talk will not necessarily be when you think is convenient!

- Try not to react to behaviour but think about what is going on underneath. Show empathy and use phrases like 'I'm wondering if you're feeling frustrated' or 'I can see you are feeling angry'
- Avoid ranting, shouting, swearing etc and/ or overly punitive sanctions/ consequences as this will almost always escalate the situation
- Use the STOP system - if you feel things are escalating take a step back or remove yourself and think about what is happening, what you are feeling and why, and what your options are (and what the consequences will be for you/ your teenager); taking a break or time out will allow space to think and tempers to calm and you can resume the conversation then with a rational head on
- Try to notice what the triggers are for your teenager. You will probably notice a pattern and then be able to focus on strategies to avoid/ diffuse situations
- Model the behaviour you want to see from them. You as a parent are the most influential factor in your teenager's life. If you are calm and in control they will learn to manage situations this way too
- Offer a hug if your teenager seems stressed or upset. This can sometimes diffuse things and help them to talk about what is bothering them
- Have family meetings. Sit and talk about what is going well and what is causing stress in the family and problem solve ways to improve or resolve this e.g. you agree to some things you will change and your teenager does the same. If helpful you can write this agreement on a piece of paper, sign it and stick it up somewhere central (e.g. kitchen) and refer to it if issues arise
- Discuss choices and consequences with your teenager and be clear about the expectations you have of them
- Only use consequences where absolutely necessary and only give the consequence that has been discussed and agreed
- Always bring expectations/ discussions back to the fact you love and care about your teenager and want them to be safe/ happy
- Be considered in any decisions/ consequences - if you don't know what to say/ how to tackle something then say you will think about it and talk with your teenager again later in the day/ the next day
- Don't force communication – if you think your teenager is low/ struggling offer that you are there to talk/ listen/ support them and then give them space
- Try texting your teenager if talking is difficult for you both; this is often an easier way for them to express themselves and gives time and space to process things
- Discuss using phones/ social media/ internet safely and responsibly and talk about the possible consequences of sending inappropriate texts/ photos/ information etc
- Talk with your teenager about how they feel about their phone/ social media etc and the pressure this can put on young people
- Put boundaries in place around phone use. It is recommended, until they are 16 years old, that you take their phone at night and plug it in somewhere

outside their bedroom. Most teenagers will not have the willpower to have their phone next to them and not use it/ check it so it's best to take that temptation away from them!

- Talk with teenagers about friendships/ relationships and the qualities they want in a friend and ask them to reflect on whether the friends they have match up to that
- Help them to problem solve regarding friendship issues/ peer pressure e.g. ways they could manage conflict or disagreements or what they could do if they felt pressured to do something they know isn't okay/ don't want to do
- Discuss using codewords/ phrases if they are in an unsafe situation e.g. texting a word or picture or calling you and saying they need something e.g. asthma pump (this will enable you to call them and tell them they have to come home; they can then make out to friends that you are being an annoying parent and that they have to leave cos you've told them to and they can remove themselves from that situation without losing face)
- Help your teenager to identify people who they can talk to who can support them/ build networks of support (including staff from school, family members, neighbours, club/ activity leaders and friends etc)
- Make sure you have identified your network of support too as it's equally important for you to have people you can talk with
- Provide details of websites/ apps etc that may be helpful for your teenager e.g. Kooth, FRANK, Young Minds, Think U Know, Internet Matters etc (see list below)
- Look after yourself and do things that make you happy/ keep you calm as most of the time when things feel challenging with our teenagers it's linked to our own wellbeing/ resilience

Useful websites/ contacts etc

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) - staying safe online

[kooth.com](http://kooth.com) - mental health website/ app for young people

[talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com) - advice/ info relating to drugs/ substance misuse

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org) - staying safe online

[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk) - mental health advice for young people and parents

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk) - parenting advice/ info

[www.add-vance.org](http://www.add-vance.org) - parenting advice/ info linked to ADHD/ ASD

SPA/ CAMHS 24 helpline 0300 777 0707 - advice/ referrals for mental health and emotional wellbeing

Childline 0800 1111

Samaritans 116 123

For more information on support from HABS or related agencies please visit

[www.habsfamily.co.uk](http://www.habsfamily.co.uk)