

Parenting Teens - National Families Week

The stage of adolescence is commonly a challenging time, not only for the young person but also for others that interact, teach or live with them.

As caring adults, we can all play a role in helping our young people feel more secure and okay about themselves at this time.

Here are some suggestions to help when we are mentoring or interacting with young people:



Practice patience

Remember, despite their adult size and ability to be very adult-like at times, their behavior is likely to be inconsistent at this stage of their development, which can be puzzling and frustrating. That rational thinking young person you interact with one day is likely to be irrational the next day. Be patient, the adolescent brain takes years to fully develop.

Practice acceptance

Young people want to be heard and need to be heard. Listen more than you talk, and although it can be difficult, practicing accepting how they feel about a situation, rather than going into judgement, advising or worse, criticizing. Like adults, adolescents will have strong opinions and they need to know their feelings will not be disregarded or made 'wrong'.



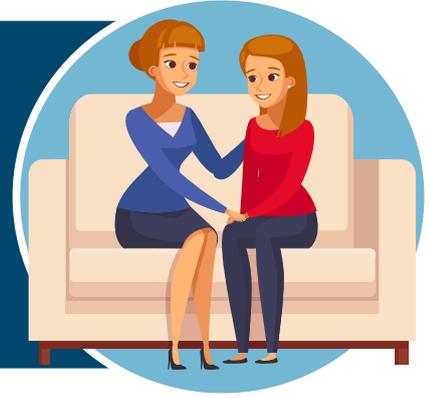
Listen, then respond

Listen to their opinions and listen some more. Ask questions, be curious about how they see things. If you have some advice, they're much more likely to take it on board once you've listened well and accepted their opinion, whatever that may be. Acceptance does not mean you agree but it provides a baseline from which further (and often healthier) communication can take place. Challenge or advise gently and respectfully.



Let them know they're not alone

"Normalise" their experience when you can, especially when they are upset. This is part of empathy, telling a young person that others too would likely feel this way, given the same circumstance and conveying you accept how they feel and that you understand. Adolescents need to know they're not alone in their overwhelming feelings, rather they're part of a humanity that sometimes has these feelings too.



Be generous and encouraging

Praise them more fully when they try to do the right thing or show their strengths. Build your capacity to be specific in your praise, rather than just say "well done", tell them exactly why they've done well and what attributes they have shown. People grow on their strengths, not their weaknesses.



Tell them you care

Through good and bad times, adolescents need to know you care. Let them know they're important to you, that you believe in them and that you're there for them. And make sure you follow this up in your actions. Adolescents (like children) will still watch what you do.



As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support. You can call Relationships Australia WA on 1300 364 277 or visit www.relationshipswa.org.au

4families - If you live in Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Cockburn, Kwinana, Mandurah, Manjimup, Margaret River or Rockingham you can get free support through our 4families service.

4Dads - The 4Dads program offers information, education, referrals and support for fathers of children up to 18 years in the Mandurah and Pinjarra areas.

Education - Our professional facilitators offer a range of courses to help you address parenting challenges.

Counselling - We provide counselling for families, including group and individual sessions. Our counsellors are experienced and skilled in dealing with family relationship challenges and can help support families to assess their needs, identify areas for change, better understand and relate to each other, restore trust and communication and to ultimately strengthen relationships within the family unit.