

Teenagers

The teenage years can be an exciting time of change for children. It can be a rollercoaster as they experiment, learn new things and work out who they are and their place in the world.

ParentLink

informing



supporting



connecting



In the pre-teen and teenage years

- Children's bodies and emotions change quickly.
- They want to fit in with their friends.
- They test limits and take risks — but the part of the brain that helps them predict what will happen, is still developing. They may do silly and dangerous things.
- There can be a lot going on with family, school, friends or work
- There may be bullying or racism.

A loving family can help teenagers deal with the ups and downs of life.

Even when children think they are a 'big man' or 'big woman', they still need your guidance, love and support.

Help teenagers to eat well and not have too much junk food. They need to be active and not spend too much time watching TV and other screens.

Teenagers' needs

Teenagers need:

- good relationships with family
- a trusted adult they can really talk to
- good role models
- help to make good decisions and deal with problems
- chances to practice being responsible
- support when someone passes away
- help to be healthy and safe
- to feel connected to culture and community.

Teenagers' sleep

Teenagers often sleep late in the morning and have trouble getting up for school. Changes in hormones mean they get tired later at night and tend to sleep in. It helps to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, to have regular exercise and limit caffeine. A 20 minute nap also helps. Turn off computer games and phones, and relax before bed.

Please note: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this website may contain images, voices or names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings or printed material.



ACT
Government

AN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARENTLINK GUIDE

www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Parents are important to teenagers, even if it doesn't always seem that way

Teenagers need you to:

- be someone they can trust and rely on. Only make promises you can keep
- really listen to them.

Talk with them about:

- how they are feeling
- treating people with respect
- being responsible
- taking risks
- staying safe and healthy.

As they get older make sure they have good information about drugs and alcohol, mental health, safe sex and contraception. If they don't want to talk with you about these things, make sure they have another trusted adult to talk to — uncle, aunty, other family member or friend.

Try to:

- know what's going on in their life
- help them have friends, interests and activities
- praise and celebrate their successes.

If there is bullying or racism, tell teenagers:

- the problem is with the other person — not them
- to stay calm and not put themselves in danger — talk about safe ways of handling things
- to come to you or another trusted adult for help.

You are a role model for your children. Let them see you making positive choices in your own life.

Teenage behaviour

It's OK to have rules about teenagers' behaviour. It keeps them safe as they become more responsible. Rules could be about:

- how they treat others
- helping around the house
- keeping school and work commitments
- where they go and who they spend time with
- what time they come home
- letting you know where they are.

Agree on rules together and what will happen if they are broken. Keep consequences reasonable and short.

Arguments

There can be arguments when teenagers push limits. Try to:

- stay calm — don't shout back
- listen to their point of view
- tell them why you think things are important, such as respect, caring for others and sharing responsibilities — try not to lecture.

When things calm down talk about what went wrong and what else you both could have done. Help them deal with any issues and find help if they need it.

All families argue at times but violence or abuse is never OK. If your child is violent towards you or others, get help. If you are in immediate danger call the police on 000.

If there is anger or violence:

- don't retaliate — it makes things worse
- be clear you do not allow violence or abuse
- keep yourself and others safe. If there is immediate danger, call the police on 000.

When to get help for your child

Most teenagers cope with support from family and friends. Your child may need extra help if they:

- feel low much of the time
- lack energy or motivation
- are angry a lot
- lash out or are violent to people or pets
- feel worthless or guilty
- self-harm or talk about suicide
- are using drugs or alcohol.

Your doctor or Aboriginal health service is a good place to start.

Tell children you love them even if you don't like what they do



This guide's content was produced by Parenting SA, Women's and Children's Health Network.

© Department of Health and Ageing, Government of South Australia (revised 02/16). Reproduced with permission and adapted by the ACT Government to reflect Australian Capital Territory laws (05/17).

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

Published by ParentLink, Community Services Directorate
GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT 2601

e parentlink@act.gov.au
t 13 34 27

Looking for more information?

ParentLink—for other parenting guides, online parenting information www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Child and Family Centres—for parenting information and support
www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/childandfamilycentres

Raising Children's Network—covering topics for parenting newborns to teens <http://raisingchildren.net.au>

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation t 6296 8900 www.gugan-gulwan.com.au

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service t 6284 6222 www.winnunga.org.au

Relationships Australia Dhunlung Yarra Service is dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples t 6122 7100 www.racr.relationships.org.au