

Provide house rules and boundaries

House rules give a framework for what goes on in the home. When you involve your teenagers in deciding the house rules they will have much more incentive to cooperate. Boundaries about good behaviour still matter, particularly with regard to their safety and wellbeing. Choose which battles really need fighting and aim to stay consistent. For example, is it more important that they tidy their room or that they return home on time?

Help them build for the future

The media gives teenagers mixed messages about how they should live. Who your teenagers spend their time with and how they behave will greatly influence the decisions they make. Peer pressure may encourage them to have sex, drink, try drugs

or spend more money than they should. Give them tools to use to withstand unwanted pressure, especially with regard to partners. Help them think about the qualities they want in a relationship.

They will talk about the big issues of life with their friends, but you are still the biggest influence in their lives. Make a point of passing on your values to your children to help them make good choices in the future.



When emotions run high it can feel as if a match has been struck. Our role as parents is to help children blow the match out.

Katharine Hill



Care for the Family aims to create resources that help to build firm foundations for family life and help those who face family difficulties.

Resources

Attend a local *Time Out for Parents – The Teenage Years* course cff.org.uk/courses

Read *Teenagers! What Every Parent Has to Know* by Rob Parsons

Watch the *Parentalk – The Teenage Years* course cff.org.uk/courses



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Top Tips For Parents

The Teenage Years



Being the parent of a teenager can sometimes feel like taking a long journey with no guidebook!

Here are some tips to help you navigate the ups and downs of those teenage years.

Understand their search for identity

A key challenge for teenagers is to find out who they are, what they are good at, and what group they fit into. Whether it's what to wear or having the latest technology, the opinions of others, especially their peers, really does matter to them.

Keeping the lines of communication open often takes effort, but is important in helping your teenager with these challenges.

Communicate at their level

Teenagers are often uncommunicative. Sometimes they do want to share problems or difficulties with trusted adults but they don't know how to start. Try to be available when those moments come.

They are not always comfortable with face-to-face chats and can find it easier to talk to you while you are doing something else. Often, all they want is to be able to let off steam and say exactly how they feel. At times like this you don't need to come up with clever answers.

Give them a sense of belonging

Teenagers need a secure base from which to explore the world and come back to when they need an anchor. Family traditions, such as special birthday celebrations, create a sense of belonging and identity. Eating together is also a great way to stay connected and build strong relationships.

Give them support

There are challenges for teenagers to cope with as their bodies change and pressure at school increases. Reassure your teenager about their own physical development – everybody's timetable is unique. Go along to parents' evenings and school events and, if possible, try to provide somewhere quiet where they can get their homework done.

Help build their self-esteem

A teenager's self-esteem is fragile and easily damaged. We can show them we love and accept them, even if we don't always like what they do. Focus on their achievements, not their mistakes. Look for specific things you can praise – and catch them doing something right!

Try to understand them

Teenagers need to feel understood. When they are feeling low or expressing themselves in an inappropriate way, think about what it must feel like to be them in that moment and try to see a situation through their eyes.

This doesn't mean we necessarily have to agree with their behaviour or views, but it shows we care about what's going on in their world and are trying to help.

Help them develop independence

Teenagers need to become independent. Our job, over time, is to change from 'controller' to 'consultant'.

Handing over control bit by bit for decisions affecting their own lives encourages them to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes.

