

PARENTING YOUR TEENAGER

The teenager period is a time of changes for the young person. He is no longer a young child, neither is he an adult.

Understanding Teenager Development

1. Physical Development

A teenager is very conscious of his body. Having a few pimples on the face could spell disaster.

2. Intellectual Development

Your teenager tends to speak his mind and express what he thinks and knows. He is more likely to challenge traditional beliefs and authority. He wants to reason and react.

3. Social Development

Your teenager's world is a world of friends and peers. He spends more time outside the home. He is more sensitive to what other people may say or think, especially those of the opposite sex.

4. Emotional Development

Changes to the sexual organs make your teenager highly aware of his sexual feelings and responses. He becomes more easily aroused by outside stimulation and his responses are more pronounced.

5. Moral Development

Your teenager is often idealistic and seeks justice and fairness. Those who have followed their parents' religion may question and even adopt other beliefs.

Relating with Teenagers

1. Prepare

Prepare for changes in your child. Accept the fact that he may grow into a most unexpected teenager!

2. Accept Teenage Behaviour

It is unrealistic to expect your teenager never to misbehave or break any rules. He wants to try anything adults are permitted to do (eg. smoking, drinking, watching uncensored movies, etc.). Be understanding and discuss matters with him.

3. Communicate With Your Teenager

Your teenager may prefer to keep to himself or talk to his friends, and likes privacy. Talk to your teenager as an adult and do not belittle him, especially in public.

4. Provide Guidance And Support

Provide your teenager with guidance on making friends, dating, sexuality, money, school and career. Help him to clarify and reflect on his choices, behaviour and attitudes.

5. Deal With Boy-Girl Relationship And Sexual Issues

Educate your teenager on sex and related issues. Otherwise, get help from knowledgeable people. Encourage your teenager to attend talks or introduce him to relevant books.

6. Discipline And Limits

Decide together with your teenager the guidelines for behaviour. He needs to know clearly what is expected, permissible and appropriate.

Guidelines For Parent Child Relationships

- Try to set a side time on a regular basis to do something fun with your child.
- Never disagree about discipline in front of the children.
- Never give an order, request, or command without being able to enforce it at the time.
- Be consistent, that is, reward or punish the same behavior in the same manner as much as possible.
- Agree on what behavior is desirable and not desirable.
- Agree on how to respond to undesirable behavior.
- Make it as clear as possible what the child is to expect if he or she performs the undesirable behavior.
- Make it very clear what the undesirable behavior is. It is not enough to say, "Your room is messy." *Messy* should be specified in terms of exactly what is meant: "You've left dirty clothes on the floor, dirty plates on your desk, and your bed is not made."
- Once you have stated your position and the child attacks that position, do not keep defending yourself. Just restate the position once more and then stop responding to the attacks.
- Look for gradual changes in behavior. Don't expect too much. Praise behavior that is coming closer to the desired goal.
- Remember that your behavior serves as a model for your children's behavior.
- If one of you is disciplining a child and the other enters the room, that other person should not step in on the argument in progress.
- Reward desirable behavior as much as possible by verbal praise, touch or something tangible such as a toy, food or money.
- Both of you should have an equal share in the responsibility of discipline as much as possible.

The "3 Fs" of Effective Parenting

Discipline should be:

- **Firm:** Consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when the inappropriate behavior occurs.

- **Fair:** The punishment should fit the crime. Also in the case of recurring behavior, consequences should be stated in advance so the child knows what to expect. Harsh punishment is not necessary. Using a simple Time Out can be effective when it is used consistently every time the behavior occurs. Also, use of reward for a period of time like part of a day or a whole day when no Time Outs or maybe only one Time Out is received.
- **Friendly:** Use a friendly but firm communication style when letting a children know they have behaved inappropriately and let them know they will receive the “agreed upon” consequence. Encourage them to try to remember what they should do instead to avoid future consequences. Work at “catching them being good” and praise them for appropriate behavior.

HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH STRESS

It is not uncommon for even young children to be exposed to stress.

Sources of Stress

1. The Individual

Every child is born with some inherent traits. These can affect the way he reacts to people, events and stress.

2. Environment

For most children, stress from the environment comes primarily from home and school.

3. Major Events

Children go through major events at each stage of their development. They are likely to experience some degree of stress as they move from one stage to another. They will be exposed to different situations and encounter events that need new skills and way of coping.

4. Interpersonal Relationships

A child will experience less stress if his relationship with significant people is warm, loving, accepting and affirming.

Effects of Excessive Stress

1. Emotional Problems

- Depression
- Shyness and sensitivity
- Inadequacy
- Fear and anxiety

2. Conduct Problems

- Disobedience
- Stealing
- Refusal to go to school
- Aggression

3. Physical Problems

- Nervous mannerisms
- Illness

Dealing with Stress

1. Accept Stress

- Help your child expect that life is stressful.
- Help your child to anticipate stressful situations.

2. Adapt to Home Environment

- Have as few changes as possible in care-givers.

- Keep to routine in the home.

3. Set Realistic Expectations

- Set appropriate standards for your child
- Be willing to accept less than the best.
- Assess the capabilities of your child carefully.
- Know your child's inclinations and work within his capabilities.

4. Provide Structure and Freedom

- Set some minimal standards and rules. Let your child do what he wants as long as he is able to keep to the standards and rules.

5. Avoid overload

- Monitor your child's schedule to ensure no overload.
- Ensure your child has time to work and rest.

6. Encourage Play and Recreation

- Have fun with your child.

7. Make Preparation

- Help your child prepare for stressful situations.

8. Teach Relaxation

- Teach your child to relax.
- Let your child be creative in choosing the kind of play he wants.

9. Strengthen Relationships

- Make your child feel wanted and accepted. Your child will know that he has someone to turn to, to share feelings and concerns and to find protection.

10. Teach Coping Skills

- Give your child the opportunity to experiment and experience success in what he does.
- Resist the temptation to intervene in every situation encountered by your child.