

Emotional Wellness & the Adolescent Years

Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood into adulthood. Teens often have a strong desire to be independent. So they may struggle with still being dependent on their parents. They may also feel overwhelmed by the emotional and physical changes they are going through. At the same time, teens may be facing a number of pressures:

- Fitting in at school and among friends.
- Relationships with friends.
- Doing well in school and making good grades.
- Excelling in activities such as sports.
- Participating as a member of the family.
- Working a part-time job.

Communicating your love for your child is the single most important thing you can do to help them during their teen years. Children decide how they feel about themselves in large part by how their parents react to them. For this reason, it's important for parents to help their children feel good about themselves. You can do this by:

BUILDING THEIR CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM. Praise them—and be specific. Tell them exactly why you are impressed or proud of them. Spend time with them and let them know how much you value them.

SUPPORTING THEM EMOTIONALLY. Encourage them to talk to you. Listen and help them understand their feelings. Don't judge.

PROVIDING THEM SAFETY AND SECURITY. Give them unconditional love. Maintain routines so they feel secure. Make sure they know home is a safe place for them.

TEACHING THEM RESILIENCY. Teach your child how to make it through the tough times. Help them cope with change, manage stress, and learn from setbacks.

It is also important to communicate your values with your child. Set expectations and limits. These could include insisting on honesty, self-control, and respect for others at all times. At the same time, allow your teenager to have their own space and be their own person.

Parents of teens often find themselves noticing only the problems. They may get in the habit of giving mostly negative feedback and criticism. Teens need feedback, but they respond better to positive feedback. Remember to praise appropriate behavior. This will help your teen feel a sense of accomplishment and reinforce your family's values.

