



# Global Wellness Monthly

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## Communicating with teenagers

### How to help your child through their teenage years

Parents are often shocked by how difficult it can be to communicate with their children as they grow into teenagers. Overnight, your previously cheerful son or daughter can become sullen, moody, aggressive or withdrawn. But by understanding what is happening to them, and learning the best ways and times to communicate, you can help them through this difficult time.

### Understanding what is happening to your teenager

The teenage years are difficult for us all. Puberty affects our bodies and emotions, and we feel confused and embarrassed about the changes taking place. We can also become aware of our lack of communication skills compared to adults, and often don't have the confidence to find the right words. As teenagers we need more privacy and also become more independent. We test boundaries to see how far we can push. Sometimes we talk back to our parents and teachers and behave out of character. If any of this sounds familiar, then rest assured that it is completely normal and can often be worked through with the right communication tactics.

### How to communicate with your teenager

- Try to listen without judging and keep an open mind. Take the time to ask how they are, and try to understand where they're coming from rather than pushing your own opinions on them.
- Spend time alone with your teenager. Go out for coffee or do something they enjoy, e.g. bowling or going to the cinema.
- Use open questions to initiate conversations, e.g. "How do you feel about going on holiday with us?" rather than, "Would you like to go on holiday with us?"
- Pick the right time to talk. They might be more responsive when they've come in from an evening out, or when you're in the car.
- Act as a role model by communicating well with your other children and with your partner.

## At a glance

- It's normal for teenagers to feel confused and embarrassed and to push boundaries.
- Learning how to communicate with your teenager can help.
- If you're worried about your teenager, get support for them (and you).

## Did you know?

International Youth Day is taking place this month on the 12th of August.



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- When you're having a conversation, don't use the opportunity to tell them off about something, or tell them how they should be doing something.
- Try to remain 'the adult' at all times. It's natural to feel wound up or frustrated by your teenager's behaviour, but getting caught up in the argument isn't helpful. Leave the situation for ten minutes to cool down if necessary, and stay calm and rational.
- Don't put your teenager or their opinions down. Teenagers have a strong need for your approval, even if they won't admit it to you.
- Be clear about your boundaries and follow through. If your teenager keeps coming home late, explain what will happen if they do it one more time (e.g. they won't be allowed out next weekend). And make sure you take this action if necessary.

### What to do if you're worried about your teenager

If you feel that your teenager's behaviour is very out of character, and they won't talk to you about what is happening, the following suggestions will help.

- Try not to panic. Teenagers often go through difficult times and grow up to be well-adjusted adults.
- Continue to listen and be available for your teenager, however frustrated you feel.
- Ask your teenager if there are any adults they would feel more comfortable talking to, such as a doctor, a relative, or a friend of the family. Offer them the opportunity to talk to a counsellor (either through their school or doctor).
- Talk to other adults involved with your teenager and ask if they've noticed anything different, e.g. their teachers, their friend's parents etc. You might want to let your teenager know about this in advance so you're not going behind their back.
- Visit your doctor or contact a support group to talk through your worries.

It's not always easy having good conversations with your teenager. But by understanding what they're going through, and following our communication tips, they'll appreciate your support through this difficult time.



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