

More help...

Sometimes a young person's behaviour might suggest they need more help with their feelings of anger and sadness, and sometimes parents need extra support too! Asking for support is an important part of helping to make things better. Here are some details of where you will find extra help.

Local Support and Resources

Schools and Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSAs)

Schools provide valuable support and highly experienced individuals who are there to help young people and their families. This includes Parent and Family Support Advisors who offer one-to-one advice, parenting support and provide links to other services.

The Parent Toolkit

A local information portal developed by practitioners and parents – it covers all the main topics that parents get concerned about such as behaviour, sleep & healthy eating. It also provides parents with information about online and local training programmes: www.cypsomersethealth.org

The Little Book of Life Hacks

Tips for supporting wellbeing and mental health developed by young people in Somerset www.cypsomersethealth.org/lifehacks

Further links for parents and young people

Time to Change www.time-to-change.org.uk/parents Talking with your teenager about mental health

Family Lives www.familylives.org.uk
Parenting and family support

MindED for Families www.minded.org.uk Top tips and advice for worried parents

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents
Parent helpline and information portal

The information in this leaflet was developed in partnership with parents, schools, Public Health and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS). It was created for anyone who looks after and is a role model for teenagers. The term 'parent' means all carers of young people such as foster carers, adoptive parents, step parents and grandparents.



WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK

Teenage Years

Information for Parents

Being a parent or carer is one of the most rewarding things we can do, but it can also be one of the most difficult. Almost all parents will have times when they worry about their children and their own ability to support their child. This is certainly the case for the parents of teenagers.

Knowing how to respond to the needs of teenagers isn't always easy and there are no 'right' answers. Every young person is different but it can help us in our role as parents to find out more about teenagers, to reflect on how we interact with them and, when necessary, to seek more advice and support if we need it. This leaflet has been put together to help explain teenage behaviour and provide advice to support healthy relationships between young people and their parents. We hope it helps.

A Time of change

Between the ages of 12 -19 years, young people go through a period of change. They not only develop physically but they also experience emotional changes because of what is happening in their brain.

Alongside this, they can start to experience increased pressure from friendships and exams and all of this can make them anxious and stressed.

Young people are on the verge of entering a potentially exciting time in their life but it can also feel very confusing and sometimes even a bit frightening. To help support these changes, parents may want to adjust the way

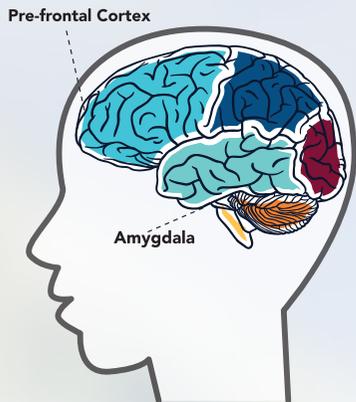
they parent in order to respond to the very different needs of their teenage child.

The Teenage Brain

Research suggests that during the teen years the brain goes through significant changes and these changes can often continue well into adulthood. Unused connections in the brain are pruned away and others are strengthened.



All this pruning activity happens at the back of the brain whereas the front part, called the pre-frontal cortex, which is used to help us plan, think and regulate emotions, develops last.



When it comes to making decisions, young people may often rely on a part of the brain called the amygdala. But this bit of the brain is designed to help us survive so is much more responsive to emotions, impulses and aggression. During this period adolescents can sometimes be more prone to riskier behaviour, act impulsively or be more likely to have emotional outbursts.

“Teenagers need to be able to express their feelings and be taken seriously, just like anyone!”
Parent, Mendip

This doesn't mean that young people shouldn't be held responsible for their actions but it's good for parents to understand that the teenage brain is going through these changes because it can help to explain some of the behaviour that adults find difficult.

Give them a chance to say what they are feeling

Parents can provide opportunities for young people to explore their feelings when they arise. Giving teens the chance to discuss their core emotions such as anger, fear and anxiety, means they are less likely to project them through challenging behaviour. Feelings are normal, it's what we do with them that matters!

“Give us space to let our emotions out - Sometimes we need to scream, shout, cry, rage or punch a pillow. Help us do that safely!”
Young person, Somerset

Give them space

Teenagers need time alone. They are becoming independent and are going through physical changes that they need space to explore. Parents shouldn't take it personally if they appear to be shutting them out but find ways to support their confidence by being available to listen to them and not dismissing their concerns or worries.



Give them boundaries

Although they may try to push the limits, teenagers need boundaries. Try to involve them in discussion when setting rules so that they recognise the consequences of their actions. One of the most difficult things about being a parent is knowing when to allow them to make their own mistakes and when it is necessary to step in to avoid disaster. Teenagers may seem to reject or dismiss your views but they still need you to show them you care!

“I told her that I needed to say 'no' sometimes because I wanted to keep her safe. She really got that!”
Parent, Taunton

Help them to feel good about who they are

Teenagers will start to explore their identity and who they are. They will become more concerned about body image and may feel pressurised to look a certain way. Listen out for signs that they are unhappy about their appearance and find ways to make them feel positive and special

about who they are. If you ever feel concerned, ask for advice (see back page for local support).

“Teenagers really need boundaries. It can feel like hard work putting the boundaries in but I think they actually feel better knowing where they stand and what's allowed.”
Parent, Wivliescombe

Communication

Living with teenagers is all about communication and creating positive opportunities to listen and talk together. This can be particularly important if a young person needs to ask for help about something that's worrying them.

Young people may give up quickly if parents don't seem fully engaged or don't take their problems seriously.

Try actively watching your own behaviour. How are you reacting? If conversations start to get heated, it can be helpful to take a long, deep breath before you respond. Young people are more likely to regulate their emotions and listen to your advice if you are calm.

But don't forget to let them know how you are feeling too and that even though things get tense, you still love them!

“As a parent you really need to listen three times as much as you talk!”
Parent, Taunton