

Go to
Never too old to play!



Supporting teens to navigate their social world, manage stress and build essential skills for adulthood through play.

Parent-Teen Relationships

Build strong connections with older children by being playful.

Playful and relaxing times together will foster connection and improve communication. We can communicate interest and respect for teens and their world through playfulness.

When teens are struggling through difficult times and don't want to talk, try to make yourself available for relaxation and connection.

****Sometimes being with your young person, even if only for 5 mins, can help them feel less isolated****

Peer Relationships

Play facilitates friendships and develops social networks. Connection between teens is central to learning negotiation, co-operation, conflict resolution which will help with adapting to future challenges.

Digital well-being

Video games & social media can offer opportunities for play & connection but ****excessive screen time**** can lead to a lack of real connection, loneliness, addiction and poor self-esteem.

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Making Time

Set aside time for your teen. This is just as important when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Try to be inventive and find activities which they will enjoy and will help you both connect, allowing space from worries.

Eye contact & direct conversation can be difficult for teens!

Getting alongside your teen for example, in the car, walking the dog, ballgames, watching TV, gaming together, shopping, preparing/eating meals, can all be opportunities for listening and giving attention in a non-judgmental, non-threatening atmosphere.

****Humour can help to lighten the mood**** But remember, avoid sarcasm as young people often feel this belittles their problem**

Play & Curiosity

By being playful and curious, parents can show understanding toward their teen.

'Wondering' out loud can help the young person feel you are curious about their life and taking their issues seriously without enforcing your solutions. For example, "I wonder what would have happened if...?" "I wonder if you are okay with the way it turned out?" "I wonder if you would do something different if it happened again?"

Play & Acceptance

Play allows for downtime and a non-judgmental space between you and your teen. It sends an important message of acceptance.

Unconditional acceptance of a young person's thoughts, feelings and struggles will build their self-esteem.

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Trust and Empathy

Being playful builds trust and empathy and is good for bonding.

Playful, curious conversation with your teen can encourage empathy towards themselves and others. (For example. "I'm guessing that must have been hard for you?" "How do you think Joe felt?" "I can see that would hurt your feelings" ...)



Strike a Balance

To support your teen's well-being, try to encourage them to strike a balance between face to face & screen time.

Encourage equal measures of organized sports/activities/study time with spontaneous play and connection with peers.



Useful reading

'Creating Loving Attachments' ...Golding & Hughes, 2012.

"Teenagers & Attachments: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning." D Hughes & K Brisch, 2009

Down time

Finally, we all need 'down time' to recharge our batteries so we can face all the daily challenges of life. In this respect, children and young people are no different to adults.

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