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# UNDERSTANDING TEENAGERS

YOUTH



Parent Line NI

0808 8020 400

Looking after yourself is essential when parenting a teenager. If you are caring for your own needs and well-being, your teenager will learn these skills too. You will also be protecting your capacity to cope with any additional stress or difficulties.



**I need you, go away**

Teens' behaviours can become difficult when they need us most. If feeling unlovable, teens often create a no-go zone around themselves, making it harder to reach out for the support they need.



Teens are hard-wired to find out who they are. They need to push boundaries, explore their new capabilities and generally practise moving from dependence to independence.



Teens need us to regularly revisit our expectations of them. By adjusting limits & boundaries and re-negotiating all sorts of trust issues, we can enable them to move safely from childhood to adulthood.

**I need you but I am using my behaviour to push you away.**

Teens often don't feel good about themselves, and are not sure where they fit in. It is easier to hide this vulnerability behind a 'smoke-screen' of difficult behaviours.



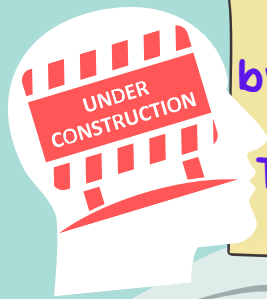
**Roots and Wings**  
Give the ones you love wings to fly  
roots to come back  
and reasons to stay.  
Dalai Lama

**I need to know you are always here for me.**  
Feeling judged or rejected creates more insecurity.  
Can you see the real me?  
Do you understand me?  
Can you help me?  
Do you still love me?

Parenting a teen can be one of the most rewarding parenting experiences. Supporting your child through these years of massive emotional and physical change can put intense pressures on both of you. Try to focus on nurturing your relationship.



We are here to support, listen or advise anytime. Contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm. Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm



The developing teenage brain functions differently from an adult brain. Teens literally experience the world differently.

### Pre-frontal cortex

(for planning, organising, rational thinking and understanding consequences of actions)

This is usually the last area to develop in teen brains which is why we see more impulsive and risk taking behaviours.

### Hormones

(these influence social as well as sexual behaviours and can have a big impact on teens' reactions to stress)

A massive increase in hormone production, along with rapid and uneven brain development, can cause havoc with everyday thoughts, feelings and behaviours

### Amygdala

(for emotional responses and instinctive survival reactions)

Teens use this area more than adults. The amygdala is fully functioning from birth and teens are hugely influenced by it's emotional and knee-jerk triggers whilst other areas of their brains are forming.

Brains continue to develop after teenage, well into mid 20s.

Natural sleep rhythms & body-clocks can be hugely impacted by changing melatonin levels. Teens often feel constantly 'jet-lagged' finding daily timings extremely difficult to manage. Your night owl/morning sleepy head is not necessarily being deliberately difficult or lazy. This can be physiological.



Teenagers can have difficulty recognising & interpreting facial expressions and non-verbal communication. It is important to convey information as clearly as possible to avoid misunderstandings.

Teenagers are growing and developing very quickly, similar to the toddler years. They need your constant support, understanding, patience and love.

