

A Go To Guide for Parents of Teenagers



Parenting Tweens and Teens
A Go-To guide for parents
Advice, information and signposting



Welcome

If you've picked up this resource, chances are things may feel difficult right now. Perhaps you're worried about your teenager, struggling with constant arguments, feeling shut out, or wondering why nothing seems to work anymore. You may feel like you've tried everything, run out of ideas, or simply don't know what to do next.

Parenting a teenager can be challenging at the best of times. When you're also coping with your own stresses, mental health difficulties, financial pressures, relationship challenges, or other demands of everyday life, it can feel even harder.

This go-to guide is about helping you understand what might be happening for your teenager, exploring practical ways to manage and reminding you that change is possible—even when things feel stuck. It covers quick, easy-to-read tips from managing social media, talking about relationships and sexuality to keeping calm and parenting on!

Most importantly, you are not expected to do this alone. Reaching out for support is a sign of strength, and there are people, services, and communities who can help.

Whatever your situation, we hope this go-to guide offers encouragement, understanding, and practical support as you and your teenager continue your journey together.

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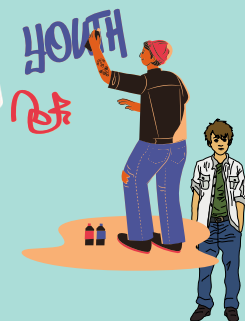
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Section One

Go-To for UNDERSTANDING TEENAGERS



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.

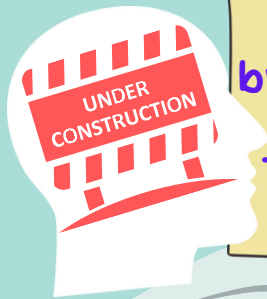
Dalai Lama

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.

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Go-To for LIVING WITH TEENAGERS



Some teens manage these years better than others. For those who struggle, their difficult attitudes & behaviours are often 'smoke-screens' for the overwhelming emotions they can't handle. Understanding, responsive parents can make all the difference.

Keeping your balance

Teens need to express the feelings they cannot cope with. They usually share negativities with people closest to them, where they feel safest.

Teens are expressing how they feel, NOT how they feel about you, but they often make it sound that way! Try to protect your own well-being by refusing to take negative words & actions personally. This way you stay strong enough to provide the support & guidance they need.

If things are getting tricky...

Give yourself a second.
Gently breathe in
some patience and
parenting confidence

Try to listen with
curiosity to hear,
not to reply.

Feeling heard is very
close to feeling loved.

Consider, is what I am
about to say
kind and useful?
Am I responding, or have
I allowed myself to be
bounced into reacting?



See beyond the
behaviour
to your teen
who needs you.

Teens often want
to draw others
into their drama.
What they actually
need is your balance.

Try 'I' instead of 'you' eg;
'I wonder if...' instead of
'you should...' to help
regulate conversations.

Conflict is inevitable. Try to model the best way to cope with it.

REMEMBER: Tactical withdrawal from conflict is NOT submission

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Struggling teens often lack confidence and have low self-worth. In spite of their 'bluff & bluster' they actually need praise, acknowledgement and proof of your unconditional love.

Separate who they are as a person, from what they say & do.

Try to....

Search for the good
Be available & interested
Offer choices
Respect their private space
Facilitate all sports/hobbies
Be predictable and fair
Acknowledge all feelings
Apologise if you need to



Try to....

Remember your own needs
Avoid Micro-managing
Be non-judgemental
Ask instead of assume
Welcome their friends
Keep rules to minimum
Enjoy a common interest
Provide treats & surprises

Encourage healthy risk-taking such as abseiling, bouldering, drama etc to create a safe buzz.

Encourage a feeling of acceptance. Teens often try to reject first to avoid their worst fear of being rejected.

Encourage choices and, as far as possible, allow for learning from natural consequences.

'Parenting the new teen in the age of anxiety' Dr John Duffy
'Blame my Brain: The amazing teen brain revealed' Nichola Morgan

Fear often makes us try to control situations and others. Remembering this can help us to understand teens' behaviours, and our own.

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Section Two

Go-To for

Creating a calmer home

Small changes can have a big impact!

Daily battles, no matter what age or stage your child is, can be a common experience for parents.

Some days are more challenging than others.

At times, we can become overwhelmed, losing sight of what we are doing and how best to respond to our children.

When we are able to recognise this, we can-

Press Pause and take a step back.

Listening and pausing gives us time to decide the best approach.

Choose calm moments

In the heat of the moment, when arguments happen, we often feel angry and react, jumping in to discuss the rights and wrongs there and then, but it's highly unlikely we will resolve the situation if everyone is angry/upset.

Press pause-when emotions spill over, our bodies go into fight, flight or freeze response and we can't think straight.

Remember to Listen

Listening is a big part of communication.

By acknowledging your child's feelings & repeating their words, you help them to feel heard and understood. It can help diffuse a situation and

build up trust.

By simply saying:

"I can see
and hear you are upset
about...."

Can make a difference.

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Go-To for Creating a calmer home

Making changes to how we respond to behaviour can take time, consistency and perseverance - but it pays off when we see positive results!

Using the Pause between Behaviour and Response

Give time to calm and use our thinking brain;
Considering the most effective next steps.

Just because we have an emotional reaction on the inside doesn't mean we have to react on the outside!

We can pause & breathe, letting the urge to react rise and then go away.

Sometimes, this can take only a few seconds.

Other times, we might need to remove ourselves, if safe to do so, and give ourselves more time to calm down before we respond.

Offer choices

A great way for parents to assert themselves is by handing over some healthy control to the child - in the form of allowing the child to make choices.

"When you finish homework, you can play outside."

Rather than insist your child do something, give them options.

For more ideas...

'The Yes Brain Child' Siegal & Payne Bryson

'There's no such thing as the naughty step'

Kate Silverton

'The A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting' Sarah Naish.

Focus on needs

All behaviour is communication.

Behind every behaviour that challenges, your child is communicating a need.

Thinking about what might be driving the behaviour and what your child needs, will help shape your response, making it more effective and compassionate.

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5 STEPS TO SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR



How we respond to behaviour can make all the difference!

Behaviours come in all shapes & sizes! It can depend on age and stage of development and also what is going on in your family. There is no one answer to fix all behaviour but here are some basic steps that can help.

1 Think about what your child needs.

When tensions rise- pause & think about the need that is driving the behaviour.

Identifying need will help you respond in the best way.

Behaviour is Communication.

Your child could be tired, hungry, looking for something they cannot have, or may have had a difficult day at school and need reassurance. Thinking about & responding to the need behind the behaviour can help us respond more compassionately and effectively.

2 Validate Feelings & Stay Calm

Children will often match our emotions and energy, so it's important to try and stay calm and confident.

One of the most powerful ways to diffuse a situation or to calm an emotional child is firstly to keep calm yourself.

Remember if you need to talk to your child about something important, it works well when everyone is calm.

Naming the feeling.

It's a big part of managing it all!

Children can become overwhelmed when things unravel and don't know what to do and how to name how they are feeling. They sometimes use their bodies and vocal ability to express their big full-on feelings!

The more we can observe and name the big feelings for them, the more often it can diffuse the high emotions or slow things down a little.

5 STEPS to SUPPORTING BEHAVIOUR

3

Co-regulation

When things unravel often children don't know how to calm down & we need to help them.

4

Give Choices & consequences.

By using choices, we can implement boundaries as well as offer children a healthy amount of control. Rather than trying to insist children do something, offer them a choice between doing what you ask and a consequence for not doing so.

"It's time for dinner, you can have the snack afterward or not at all, it's your choice?"

5

Be Kind to Yourself.

Take time to look at what works best for you and your family. Ask for help if you need it & take time out to recharge the batteries.

Parents and caregivers are human too, we are not always going to get it right all the time!

Helping your child calm down and learn to self-soothe.



1. Take deep controlled breaths together.
 2. Hug a favourite toy or trusted adult.
 3. Engage your child in activity that involves their senses and awareness of their bodies - rocking, swinging, stretching, chewing.
 4. Watch objects with slow moving /soothing movements like glitter jar/fish tank.
 5. Move away from cause of distress
- **Be careful not to overstimulate your child and try to find a calming technique that works for them **

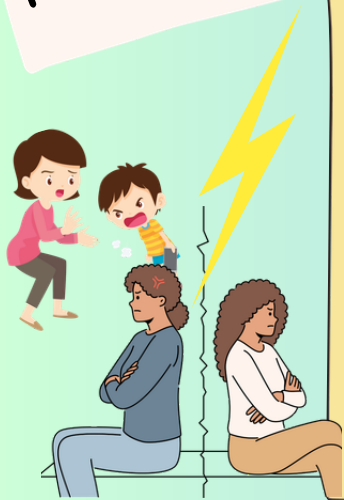
Giving your child reasons why is key to helping them understand what we are teaching them.

"It's really important that you stay close to me so I can keep you safe from the road, if you run out you could get hurt."

Children need to learn why some choices are better than others and how their behaviour affects others. It's all part of the journey of learning the cause and effect of their actions.

Go to

Peaceful connections at home



Relating, connecting and respect

Every parent/child relationship is unique. The closeness & means of communication will vary over time, ups & downs are inevitable.

The normal process of 'Rupture and Repair' can be very healthy. It is the way young people learn to disagree, negotiate & make-up.

Sometimes however, the balance of a parent/child relationship can move beyond healthy and acceptable limits

It is important for everyone's sake, to recognise when safe limits have been breached, and to know when to reach out for support.

Most children and young people gradually develop the skills they

need to regulate their big emotions.

If children do not learn these

self-regulation skills, they can develop unhealthy coping strategies.

They can put increasingly difficult mental & physical pressures on parents to absorb the feelings they can't handle on their own.

This can become serious and present as child to parent aggression.

Challenging behaviour is normal with children & young people, but if ongoing, the following behaviours

ARE NOT OK...

Physical - lashing out e.g. hitting, shoving, breaking things, animal cruelty.

Verbal - deliberately directing abusive language at another person.

Emotional - manipulation of feelings, making threats to hurt self or others

Financial - demanding money, stealing

Please reach out. Caring support is available for both of you.



Experiencing these feelings at home is NOT appropriate
intimidated afraid
isolated insecure
ashamed helpless
controlled
unsafe unsupported



It's time to seek support



Listen to your internal warning-bells if you are living with...

!Fear of upsetting the other person

!Having to 'walk-on-eggshells'

!Receiving constant criticism & put-downs

!Receiving hurtful comments & 'only joking'

!Being deliberately embarrassed/belittled

!Feeling undermined and unable to trust yourself or your judgement.



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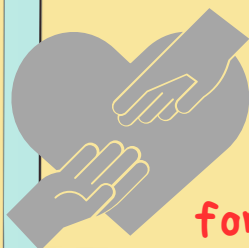


Go to Peaceful connections at home



'Flipping your Lid'
Dr Dan Siegel's
3min video helps us to
understand what
happens to our brain
when we become
emotionally
overwhelmed & unable
to think rationally.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmg9CjJ740xw>



So what can be done?

*Take time to consider your own needs & take care of your own well-being wherever and whenever possible. Small daily changes can really make a difference to how well you are able to cope and keep everyone safe.

*It can be very difficult to think clearly when under difficult pressures. Try not to allow any false feelings of guilt or shame to take hold of your reasoning.

*Reaching out, even anonymously, will help to break the cycle. You will be giving all of you a chance to find the help you need.

Remaining silent increases the risk for everyone and nothing will improve.

Consider an advance safety plan.

- Tell someone else what is going on.
- Keep your mobile easily accessible.
- Agree an easy call sign for help.
- Have a safe, lockable space to shelter.
- Keep some money & spare keys handy.
- Keep a private, secure diary of events.

If in immediate danger call the police

PSNI 999 (emergency) 101 (non emergency)

Women's Aid NI 028 90249041

Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline 0808 8021414

Men's Advice Helpline 0808 8010327

Childline 0800 1111



Coping day to day

- * Try, if possible, to maintain predictable family routines.
- * Try to notice and praise any positive behaviours.
- * Try to notice the patterns & triggers of higher tensions.
- * Try to create opportunities for non-judgemental talking.
- * Try to be aware of your own ways of communicating, both verbal and non-verbal.

In the moment, to protect your own feelings, try to remember...

- * Your child's anger is caused by big emotions they cannot manage on their own.
- * Angry emotions are being projected on to you, but this is NOT your fault.
- * In the moment, your child's angry brain has no capacity to hear reason.
- * Seeing beyond the behaviour, to your child in need, can really help you to cope.



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Go-To for 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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Go-To for Never too old to play!

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.

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?"

Eye contact & direct conversation can be difficult for teens!

Getting alongside your teen for example, in the car, walking the dog, ball games, 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 & 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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Go to

Never too old to play!

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

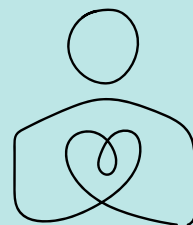
Finally, we all need 'down time' to recharge our batteries so we can face all the daily challenges of life. In this respect, children and young people are no different to adults.

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Go-To Keep Calm, Parent On...

Are you wanting to stay calm as a parent and wondering how to keep calm when your child is losing it? Or if the kids are fighting (again)? Well we can help...

Being a parent can be rewarding, but very busy, too! Between taking children to school and managing other to-dos, some days it may feel like you don't get a minute to yourself. And even when you hear about, self-care, you may dismiss it as silly, unnecessary, or even selfish.



But self-care has everything to do with health and wellness. In fact, self-care can be one of the best ways for parents to not only meet their own needs, but also their family responsibilities. Once you view self-care through the correct lens, it's easy to see that it's anything but selfish. Self-care habits help us stay healthy and at the top of our game.

THINK STOP:

- Stop whatever you're doing.
- Take a few slow breaths.
- Observe what's going on around you and in your mind,
- Pick how to proceed.

Give yourself a timeout.

Give yourself a few minutes to allow a level of reason to return to your mind. Whether it's soaking in the bath or going for a walk. You'll be in a better place to make appropriate parenting decisions.

Little and Often Wins

With a little bit of attention to your own self-care, the fog will lift. You'll feel more connected to yourself and the world around you. You'll delight in small pleasures, and nothing will seem quite as difficult as it did before. Like a car, you must keep yourself tuned up to make sure that you don't need a complete overhaul.

Practice the PAUSE;

When you can feel your emotions rising, practice the pause, empathise with yourself, adulthood is tough some days, empathise with the little heart that is in front of you, childhood is tough some days. The more you practice the pause, the more welcoming the change.

Returning yourself to calm

- This is not an emergency, .
- Our relationship is my #1 priority.
- I'm bringing the calm here.
- I can only control myself.
- It won't always be this way.
- We can always work things out.

Simple important shifts in language are simple important shifts in life.

Before reacting to your child's behaviour, pause and ask yourself;

- Would I like someone to respond to me in the way I'm about to respond to my child?
- Are my expectations reasonable and age-appropriate?
- Is my response based on MY feelings?
- What will my response model to my child?
- Is my response helpful?
- Is my response respectful and kind?

Go-To for

Strategies for Difficult Times

Aim to be gentle with yourself

- **** **Nurture**...think comfort, nourishment and rest.
- **** **Energise**...consider exercise, nature and fresh air.
- **** **Support**...find someone to listen and try to seek sources of useful information.

Wasteful Worrying

Worry is understandable but try instead to use these precious thoughts, energies and emotions positively.

If you are worrying, consider....

Is this helping me?

Is this helping anyone else?

Will it change the past?

Will it change the future?

What could I do instead?



Create a physical pressure valve....

Aim to use any adrenalin and frustrated energy in your body to do something really positive like walking, cleaning, singing....

Create a mental pressure valve.....

Connect with all your senses and be aware of your surroundings or visualise how it would feel to be safe in your favourite place

Try to reframe Forgiveness as a gift for yourself

- *** Allow yourself to take charge of your own feelings and emotional future.
- *** Choose to free yourself from feelings of hurt, anger and frustration.
- *** You are not doing the wrong or a favour, you are denying them control over you.



C | I | A

C can I **control** this?

I can I **influence** this?

A do I have to **accept** this and if so, how do I adjust my thinking?

(The Critically Reflective Practitioner
S&N Thompson)



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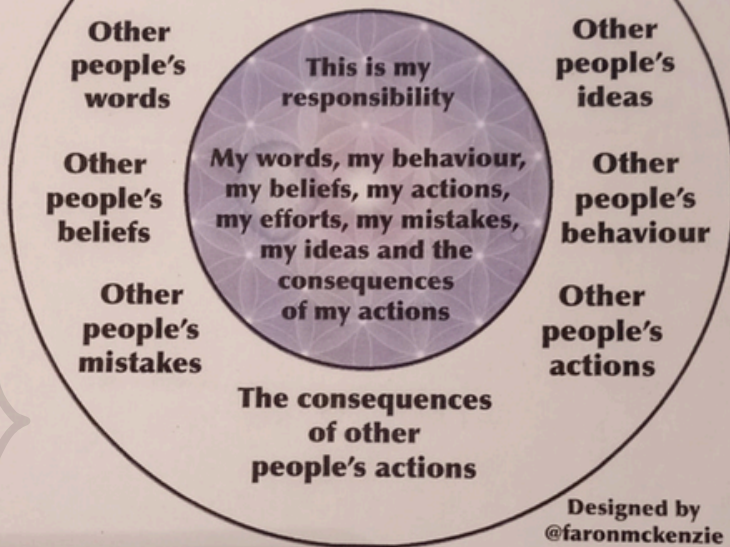
Go-To for Strategies for Difficult Times



Try to keep good connections with friends.
Try to continue making positive plans.
What could still be making you feel better?



This is not my responsibility



Designed by
@faronmckenzie

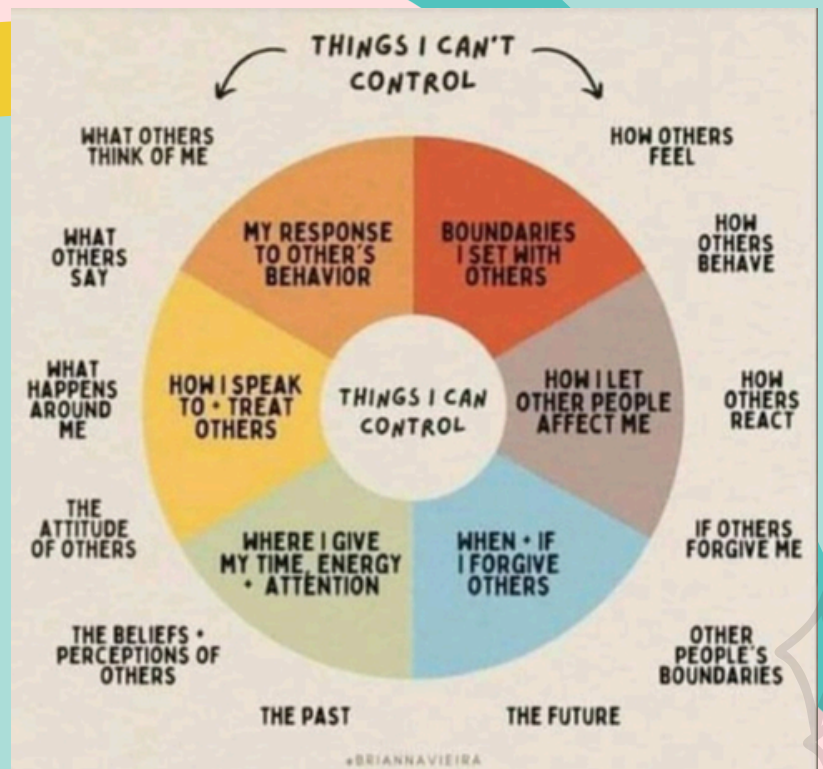
Getting Through

- **Do the do-able even if it is something small.
 - **Plan if possible but be prepared to be flexible.
 - **Try to stick to familiar routines.
- Try to find 10 minutes a day just for you.

It's the thought

that counts...

You are in control
of your own
thoughts which means
you are also in charge
of your feelings.
No one can control
these unless you hand
over your control.



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Section Three

Go-To for Talking to children about mental health



We all have mental health, all the time.
When we have good mental health, we can
happily think, feel, function & interact well.
**Aim to support your mental health by being
active, connecting with others, being present,
sharing and learning.**

Talking about mental health
is important, even from
an early age. Start by
encouraging very young
children to recognise and
describe their feelings.



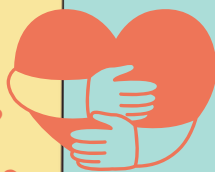
As with any other conversation
aim to use
age appropriate honesty.

Consider your child's emotional and
intellectual maturity. If they are
aware enough to ask a question,
their level of understanding is
in need of an honest answer.



Before talking to your
child about mental
health, think about
yourself.

How are you feeling?
Could this be difficult?
Could this be triggering?
Do you need support?
Would some research
be useful?



Calm Conversations

- C** Contain your child's feelings
- A** Allow them time to talk
- L** Listen carefully
- M** Manage your own responses



Well intentioned, overly-optimistic
reassurances or dismissive answers
are not useful.

Children are usually left feeling
misunderstood and isolated with
their query or worry.

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Children are more emotionally aware than we usually think. From birth, babies are hard-wired to increasingly understand our facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. This awareness is inbuilt, instinctive & protects survival.

Try to imagine your child's brain as a powerful radar attached to a huge interactive library. They are constantly absorbing, processing and storing factual and emotional information.



If children understand mental health, they learn compassion for others, and themselves.

For Young children... Keep explanations as visual as possible.

For school age.....be more specific and be prepared to explain how the situation may affect them

For teenagers.....ask them what they already think or know. Be prepared for misinformation relayed from peers and social media.

Try comparing mental ill-health with physical ill-health. Most people recover well....

Sometimes mental ill-health is very minor and we get better quickly.

Sometimes it is more serious and we need a doctor and medicines.

Sometimes it is very serious and we need to go to hospital.



It is important for children of all ages to understand that they are never responsible for the mental ill-health of others and that mental ill-health is not 'infectious'.

There is a huge range of age-appropriate children's books on this topic. They can be an excellent way to open reassuring conversations.

www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/

Also, as ever, Childline 0800111

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



Go-to for Emotionally Based School Avoidance



Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) refers to difficulty¹ in attending school due to intense, adverse emotional factors. It is estimated to affect 1-5% of school-age children and is more prevalent in secondary schools.

(Heyne, D. et al (2019). Differentiation between school attendance problems: Why and how? Cognitive and Behavioral Practice)

School Avoidance

School avoidance is different from truancy (skipping school) and school refusal or being kept home by parents.

In school avoidance, the child may want to go to school but feel they can't because of anxiety and emotional distress.

School Avoidance Cycle

Once anxiety manifests, children and young people frequently fall into a school avoidance cycle.



Early intervention is key!

Try to avoid waiting until your child stops going to school before you get help.

Stay alert for early signs.

- Talking negatively about school
- Intense emotions when preparing for school, especially after a break or illness
- Complaining of headaches or stomach aches
- Becoming more distant from family and friends
- Trouble sleeping and reluctance to get out of bed in the morning
- Feeling nauseous or unwell

"School avoidance is not about CAN'T. It is about not feeling safe enough right now."



Push/Pull factors can play a part in whether our children are happy at school

Push factors

- Good relationships with teachers & friends.
- Feeling included (a sense that they belong at school).
- Enjoying lessons and activities outside the classroom.



Pull factors

- Bullying or feeling left out and lonely.
- Worrying about body image & fitting in
- School environment, e.g., too many sounds, bright lights, or smells, can cause anxiety.
- Strict rules or having to sit still can be hard for some children.
- Changes in routine, health problems and poor relationships with teachers can also make it harder for your child to go to school.

Speak to your child's school

Ask to talk to your child's teacher, year head, pastoral care lead, or SENCO.

Write down what you want to discuss and what your child is struggling with and ensure your child is included in any plans that are being made.

Ask the teacher if they've noticed any other difficulties. Talk about changes that might help, like having a safe space when they feel overwhelmed. Agree on the changes to be made and set a time to check in again, giving your child time to get used to the new plan.



REF-School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds

Communication, planning & flexibility are essential.

Difficulties can arise at transitions e.g., periods of holiday or illness.

Successful transitions at key points are important. Good transitions involve communication between child, parent and school.

**** Focus on your child's wellbeing****



The positive Rutt

Relationships

Building good relationships with school staff can make a big difference. It's important for parents, children and the school to talk openly with each other to support the child and avoid blame.

Understanding

Many children with anxiety feel like they are always in danger. Certain things make them feel more worried or stressed. Working together is key to understanding what upsets your child and how to provide

support.

Time

Children do better when they can work at their own speed. Speak to school about changes that might help. These changes could make it easier for your child to learn and feel comfortable.

Trust

Children need to trust

them safe emotionally and that their feelings and abilities matter. It's important for them to feel like they belong in a place that understands their needs. Parents are key to helping with this understanding and to ask for changes if needed.

Supporting your child

- Spend time together talking, playing or doing an activity your child finds enjoyable.
- Discover what is happening in their lives
- Plan time with friends / family
- Listen to music that helps to calm or soothe them.
- Practice breathing techniques to relax you and your child,
- Exercise to release built up energy and stress.
- Gratitude journal – list things they are thankful for.
- Sit with the emotions - think it through- do not move on too fast.
- Draw or write down the emotion and find language to express the feelings behind it
- Externalise the anxiety
- Encourage positive self-talk –
"I can handle this"
"We can handle this together"

Supporting you

It is important to recognise the impact on you as a parent as you may be:

- Worrying people think it's your fault
- Worrying about your child's emotional health
- Worrying about your child's social development
- Worrying about your child's education and future prospects
- Worrying about your other children
- Feeling conflicted between supporting your child and adhering to school expectations
- Concerned over legal obligations related to attendance
- finding it difficult balancing work as you arrange alternative care for your child during school hours

Early intervention is key. When worries surface, speak to someone who can help. This could be your employer, the school nurse, the SENCO or a helpline such as Parentline.

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm

Go to Vaping

blanks ghost
puff bars JUU tank
E-ciggs vape pens
cloud E-hookah nic
vape sticks

Vaping is the inhalation of heated substances in aerosol form. Chemicals are delivered directly into the lungs when you breathe in. Vaping was introduced around 2007 as an aid to stopping smoking but has since grown into a global habit. It is increasingly popular with children, teens and others who have never smoked.

Research has proved that vaping is not risk free. There are major concerns for mental and physical wellbeing, especially in the young.

 It is illegal to sell vaping equipment to, or buy it for, anyone under the age of 18 

Disposable, battery powered versions are cheapest and are often considered the 'gateway' to vaping for young people. (They are expected to be banned from 2025)



What to look out for
* New batteries, 'USB drives', 'highlighters', 'pens'
* Sweet/fruity smells
Changes in your young person
* Restless/Irritable
* Defensive/secretive
* Poor concentration
* Sleep/appetite
* Thirsty/Coughing

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/pdfs/ecigarette-or-vaping-products-visual-dictionary-508.pdf

Health Service Executive Vaping and E-Cigarettes: Get the Facts Webinar
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04YVUhvJ70E>
(Excellent information cartoon video @17mins 10 seconds into presentation)

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Go to Vaping



blanks
ghost
puff bars
JUUL tank
E-cigs
cloud vape pens
E-hookah nic
vape sticks



Preparing for Conversations with your young person

*** Know your facts. Research as much as you can.

Aim for conversations, not lectures.

*** Try to approach the topic as early as possible.

Aim to be curious, ask what they already know.

*** Catastrophising and threats are rarely helpful.

Aim for support and understanding to encourage compliance.

*** Feelings of shame are often hidden by angry reactions.

Aim to avoid creating defensiveness in your young person.

Talk with not to. Listen to hear not to respond.

If young people are already vaping,
their brain chemistry may have
already have been impacted.

This means the psychological,
physical, emotional & social
implications of stopping
may be very difficult for them.



They will need your
loving support and
patience to help
them to cope with
every problem
withdrawal brings.

nichs.org.uk/vaping

publichealth.hscni.net/vaping

talktofrank.com/drug/vapes

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Section Four

Go to for
staying safe & Well online.



The internet plays an integral part of children's lives. It has many positive benefits but we also have to consider the risks. We want to support children and young people to enjoy the benefits of the online world, free from harm, fear and abuse.

'The most powerful safeguarding tool is an educated & empowered child' (Gamble, 2009).

What can parents do?

5 Tips to Remember

1



The best thing is to talk! Ask questions & listen to your child. Whilst it is important to have restrictions for online usage, it is equally important to make time to show your child you are interested in what they do online. This can encourage them to talk to you if they are worried about something or if someone they talk to online makes them feel upset or uncomfortable.

<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>

2



Try to get a good balance between online & offline! Too much of anything can be bad for our health & wellbeing and this is also the case with screen time. Encourage time spent away from devices. Think about your own screen use. If we are trying to encourage a better balance for our children, modelling the behaviour we want to encourage is the most effective method! Try to provide alternatives for children to spend time offline, this can include going for walks or other physical activity. Think about sports, clubs, groups, music, play.

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

3

Go with your instinct! If you feel something isn't right, check it out. Look out for different behaviours. It is not always easy to spot when a child is feeling anxious or low but if they seem more withdrawn or irritable than usual, it might indicate something is wrong. It is important to know what to do and how to respond to your child if they tell you something is wrong. Try to remain calm and reassure them you are there to help them. Know who to ask for help and how to report a concern.



<https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/>



4

Education is knowledge & knowledge is power!! The online world is ever changing. As parents, it can be difficult to keep up with the latest developments. However, it is important that we keep ourselves as informed as possible. Try your best to keep updated, use parental controls & privacy settings. Consider installing passwords, blocking websites or apps, setting time limits & spending limits. All of this can help limit potential risks.



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/techosaurus/>

'At a public swimming pool we have gates, signs, shallow ends and life guards. But we also teach children how to swim' (Byron Review, 2008:12).



It isn't possible to keep track of everything your child does online and so just like the real world e.g., the swimming pool, you'll rely on what you have taught them to keep them safe.



<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

5

Your Look after yourself! Trying to navigate the online world can be daunting! Self care is an important part of maintaining good health & wellbeing. Try to ensure you make some time for yourself everyday, even for just a short while.



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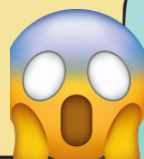


Go to Social Media 'Terms & Lingo'. Helping Parents stay informed.



Are you familiar with terms often used on social media? Do you know a catfish from a deepfake? Online terminology is constantly evolving and it's important we try to educate ourselves about language regarding online use.

Nomophobia - fear of being without your phone.



Finsta - short for a fake instagram account



Phubbing - snubbing someone who is physically present in favour of looking at your phone.



Sexting - sending or receiving messages of a sexual nature.

Other terms for this include 'nudes' or 'pics4pics'.



Remember!! IT IS AGAINST THE LAW FOR ANYONE INCLUDING A CHILD TO SEND, SHARE AND TAKE AN INDECENT IMAGE OF ANYONE UNDER 18!



(Online) Grooming - when someone builds a trusting relationship with a child, in order to exploit, manipulate or abuse them.



Sharenting - we can all share but we need to be aware! Sharenting is when a parent or carer shares news, images, videos or other potentially sensitive information about their child online. It is important to remember that images shared online can be reshared by someone else.

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Go to Social Media 'Terms & Lingo'. Helping Parents stay informed.



Cyberbullying - is bullying behaviour which takes place through the use of electronic means such as email, mobile phones or posts on social media.



Ghosting - when a person cuts off all communication with someone they know with zero warning or notice beforehand.



Cyber flashing - sending an unsolicited sexual image to a person / people without their consent. The victim is not the subject but rather the recipient.



Sextortion - the threat to release private or embarrassing media of a victim as a form of blackmail.

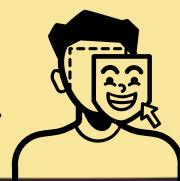
Catfish - a person who pretends to be someone they are not by posting false information.



Livestreaming - broadcasting a situation in real-time over a social media platform.



Deepfakes - adding someone's face to another person's body.



Understanding how our children communicate online is an integral part of keeping them safe. Please click on the link below for further information about words your child might use online.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/text-dictionary/>

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

Go to

Social Media - Hidden risks & Decoy Apps!

The internet offers many great opportunities for our children and young people to learn, play games, keep in contact with family and friends and access help & support. However, sometimes things aren't always as they seem & it is important we are aware of the dangers that can be hidden in plain sight!!

Remember, what you see isn't always what you get!

<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>

Age restrictions - Most social media sites are officially 13+ age, however, many children sign up when they are much younger! Unfortunately, there are adults who create fake profiles pretending to be a child or young person so that they can engage with children and young people online, for predatory reasons.



13+

Image editing tools or filters - can distort reality, resulting in convincing photos or footage that never actually happened!



Decoy Apps (also known as vault, safe or secret apps) - look like normal apps, for example, a calculator. However when a passcode is entered it allows access to lots of other information that has been stored secretly!



<https://www.safes.so/blogs/vault-apps/>

Facebook Secret Conversations - this secret messenger feature allows hidden conversations in an encrypted space that no one else can view.



<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/facebook-secret-conversations#:~:text=You%20are%20able%20to%20have,to%20iOS%20and%20Android%20users.>

Online scams - these have become more common in recent years and also much more sophisticated! Unfortunately children are often the victims of online scams as they can be more trusting and believe that what you see is what you get.



<https://www.ecpsafeguarding.co.uk/safeguarding-resources/Online%20Scams%20-%20What%20you%20need%20to%20know.pdf>

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Go to Social Media - Hidden risks & Decoy Apps!

Emoji's / slang / abbreviations - It can be difficult to keep up with these as they are forever changing and developing. Most emoji's are a fun way of communicating, however, it is important to recognise that some have a hidden harmful meaning.

Remember,
what you see
isn't always
what you get!

https://www.kidsonlineworld.com/uploads/1/2/3/1/123169829/emojis_explained.pdf

Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) - this rapidly evolving technology has become more popular, particularly ChatGPT (or Alchatbot as it's also known). It can provide many positive opportunities for young people but there are safety risks to be aware of. For example, AI Chatbots can provide suggestions of how a victim could be bullied.

<https://www.childnet.com/resources/cheat-sheet-generative-ai/>

How to reduce risks:

Communicate - talk with your child openly about online activity / habits.

Educate - make them aware of the dangers of online interactions.

Monitoring - tools and apps like Bark, Quostida or Family Link can help monitor online activity.

Vigilance - spot decoy apps. Check for duplicate apps / review app permissions and hidden folders.

*(**For Androids** - go to settings on phone, tap privacy or Apps & Notifications, select permissions manager (or App Permissions) you'll see categories, tap each one to see which apps have access, remove or allow permissions).

*(**For iPhone (ios) Devices** - open settings, tap privacy & security, you'll see categories, tap each to view and manage which apps have access - you can see and change permissions for apps).

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Go to Online Gaming



Playing video games or role-play games online is very popular for all ages. Gaming brings opportunities for fun, communication and learning various skills, but Yaosu rin p aarlal garraepha st eoxft childhood, parenting responsibilities :

How do you feel?

Is gaming online familiar to you?

Is gaming online a pleasure,
an unknown or is it a threat?

We teach our children road
safety etc. Try to approach
online safety in the same way.

Communication is Key

Start talking very early

- *Agree where play is permitted at home.
- *Agree phone/PC/tablet
- *Agree time limits
- *Agree forfeits or consequences for broken agreements



Knowledge is Power (and protection)

What are the game's age ratings?

Can you start the game together?

Is personal information shared?

Is gaming name obscure enough?

Who are the 'friends'?

Are gifts given?

Are there purchases, who pays?

Do you need to engage airplane
mode to prevent spending?

Is game chat polite/respectful?

How do you report or block?



Nurture relationships

Stay close

Be available

Show interest

Be aware of moods,
sleep & appetite.

Encourage critical
thinking and discussion.

Have fun together
on and offline



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Go to Online Gaming



Game Stickyness

Try to understand why your child may not want to stop. Are they worried about losing gains, losing a team place, letting friends down?

Try to support self-confidence and self-regulation in real life.

NO



Managing Endings

- *Agree number of game cycles in advance.
- *Try yellow card for ten minutes until time is up.
- *Try timers for child to remind themselves of limits.
- *Try to support planning, organisation and time-management in real life.



Specific Support

parentzone.org.uk

nspcc.org.uk

thinkuknow.co.uk

youngminds.org.uk

internetmatters.org

uksaferinternet.org

[childnetfamilyagreement](#)

[digital passports](#)

[Raising Children in a Digital Age.... Dr Bex Lewis](#)



Safety Plan

Take time to understand & discuss bullying & grooming with your child. What forms can it take? what to look out for.

Reassure your child that you are always their safe place if anything or anyone ever makes them feel unsure or uncomfortable, even online.



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Go-To for

Sextortion



what is it?

Sextortion is a cyber-enabled crime during which victims are lured into sharing intimate images or performing sexual acts in front of a web cam. Unbeknown to victims, their actions/ images are recorded by criminals who then use this in an attempt to blackmail children, young people and adults too.



**PARENTS
DON'T PANIC,
You are not
alone.**



Nearly two thirds of teens said they or their friends have been the targets of attempted sextortion!

**You're
Not Alone**



Sextortion is extremely embarrassing for young people. If your child has told you that this has happened, that is a massive first step. Reassure them that you are there to **HELP** not judge or condemn.

ANYONE can become a victim of sextortion.



Once the victim realises what has happened panic sets in and they can feel very afraid, vulnerable and ashamed. **Let them know they are never responsible.**

We are in your corner here at Parentline, to listen, support or advise. Please contact us Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Sextortion

Don't be afraid to lead the discussion. "If someone ever does try to use a photo of you or to get you to do something you don't want to, I will be there for you and we will figure it out together. We are stronger together!"

Top Tips for Parents



1. Take practical steps WITH your child to look at their social media usage .
TOGETHER learn about online safety .
2. Talk early and often about being a "good digital citizen" and treating people like they would face to face and not sharing anything they would not want others to see.
3. Empower your children: they have a right to say NO, to block and report the blackmailer.
4. Reassure them: often victims of sextortion blame themselves. You are there to help, they are not alone and there is always a way out.
5. Immediately inform the PSNI if your child is a victim on 101 or in an emergency call 999.
6. Look out for warning signs and tactfully broach the subject of sextortion.
7. Try to develop their thinking skills to be more aware when a predator may be targeting them.

psni.police.uk/sextortion

www.saferchoolsni.co.uk

internetmatters.org

[Online Safety
Hub- link](#)

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Self-harm -supporting concerned parents & carers

What is self-harm?

This is when someone hurts themselves on purpose as a way of trying to manage distressing or overwhelming feelings and experiences.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

cutting themselves
scratching skin
burning skin
biting skin

hitting themselves, or banging their head or another part of their body on a hard surface, pulling hair out from their head, eyebrows or eyelashes OR even shaving their heads if in distress,

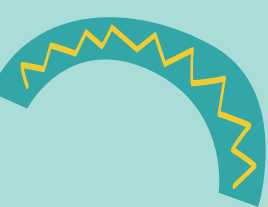
inserting objects into their own bodies

Reach out to your GP / school for support for both you and your child. This takes courage and agreement with your child. As distressing as this is, try your best to let your child know you are there to help. No blame, no shamefor anyone.

Someone who is self-harming might be dealing with lots of intense thoughts and feelings, and hurting themselves may feel like the only way to cope. Or they might feel numb and hurt themselves in order to feel something.

If you suspect your child may be self-harming it can be very upsetting and frightening but try to speak to them about your concerns showing you are there to try to understand and to help in any way you can.

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Self-harm, supporting concerned parents & carers

Easier said than done, but try supporting your child with their feelings. Over the longer-term, becoming more aware of how they feel when they self-harm, what's making them feel this way and what kinds of things help, will empower your child and you to feel more in control. This will hopefully reduce the sense of being overwhelmed for both of you and the feeling that they need to self-harm.

Keep an eye on your child without making them feel policed.

It's completely natural that when you find out your child is self-harming, you may want to watch over them or know what they're doing all the time. While it's a good idea to monitor the situation and check in with them, sensing that they're being watched may increase their feelings of anxiety and guilt. When it feels possible and they need it, give them some space.

AS shocked as you may be, TRY to stay calm and non-judgemental. They need you now !

When your child does open up, try to focus on listening, showing empathy and being curious about what it's like for them, rather than trying to 'fix' things straightaway.

Sometimes they will just want you to listen and understand how they are feeling.



If your child is struggling to talk, they might find it easier to text you or write you a letter. This also gives you time to process what they've told you and think about how you'd like to respond.

Self-harm, supporting concerned parents / carers

Strategies for self-soothing

- Writing down how they're feeling in a journal
- Writing down difficult feelings on pieces of paper and then ripping them up
- Ripping up a magazine or newspaper
- Hitting a soft cushion, pillow or bean bag
- Listening to loud music
- Having a shower
- Doing some exercise
- Going for a walk outside, or taking the dog for a walk.
- Focusing on breathing – how it feels in their body to breathe.
- Wrapping up in a blanket or duvet
- Talking to someone – a friend, family member or calling a helpline
- Tidying or organising something
- Doing a hobby they enjoy that helps them feel calm, such as painting, drawing, colouring-in, watching a favourite TV programme, playing video games, cooking or baking.
- Placing a bag of frozen food on the place they may Self Harm.

Some useful websites

<https://www.zestni.org/services/ship/>

<https://www.mindingyourhead.info/topics/self-harm>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-harm/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/coping-with-self-harm/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/self-harm/self-harm/>

Papyrus UK

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org > contact-us>

A confidential support and advice service for anyone aged under 35 who are experiencing thoughts of suicide | Call HOPELINE247 0800 068 41 41.

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or Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Go-To for

NAVIGATING YOUR TEEN'S PREGNANCY

Manage Feelings

You may have mixed feelings about your teen's pregnancy. Your feelings also may change over time, as the birth becomes closer. Do acknowledge all your feelings and talk to someone you trust if you need to, but pause and recognise that at times you may need to just focus more on supporting your teen and their range of emotions and needs.

stay connected

Remind yourself that having open conversations with your teen about their feelings can be good for your ongoing relationship. They may experience or be anxious about potential judgement from other people, so they need to know they can come to you for regular unconditional support. Make time to do activities together you both enjoy.



Ask curious and supportive questions during the pregnancy journey:

What can we do together to help you right now?

Where else can we get some advice and support?

Who do you feel most able to talk to about your feelings at the moment?

When do you prefer I check in with you – each day or each week?

Is there anyone in school you can talk to? Do you want me to go with you to speak to anyone at school?

Take it all Step by Step:

Step 1 – See the GP to get health checks* and discuss all options.

*if your child is significantly overweight or has a history of eating disorders you may wish to ask your GP to refer to a registered dietitian.

Step 2 – Allow them privacy to talk to healthcare professionals. Talk about how involved they want the baby's partner to be and how involved they want you to be.

Step 3 – Build confidence in areas such as cooking, budgeting, domestic chores.

Ask about The Family Nurse Partnership service:
<https://www.fnp.nhs.uk/>

We are here for confidential and emotional support while you navigate your teen's pregnancy. Our Helpline is open Monday to Thursday 9am to 9pm, Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Get in touch

**Monday -Thursday 9am-9pm
Friday 9am-5pm**

Saturday 9am-1pm



Call
0808 8020 400



Webchat
ci-ni.org.uk



Email
parentline@ci-ni.org.uk



Translation Service

**If English is not your first language we have
a prompt translation service set up with an
interpreter. Call 0808 8020 400**



facebook.com/parentlineni



instagram.com/parentline.ni

**Children
in Northern
Ireland**



HSC Health and
Social Care