

Surviving Adolescence...

a Brief Guide for parents and other caregivers...

part 5: Tips from Teenagers (part 2)

This series of 'Surviving Adolescence' is about supporting parents and caregivers with the delicate balancing act that is adolescence...

One of the first things to remember is that adolescence is a stage of development, a stage that is vital for the future health and well-being of the young person. It's a stage of identity formation, thinking about the future, and development of independence.

In the Part 4. of this guide to Surviving Adolescence, I gave you five important Tips from Teenagers...to help you, the Parents and Caregivers, survive their adolescent stage...



Here are another five tips collected over many years of experience.

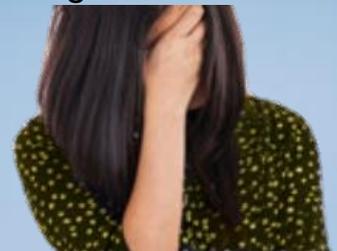
Tips from Teenagers...for Parents and Caregivers...

Number 6.

Don't humiliate me

Now, you might think this is obvious, and while there are likely to be some parents who may humiliate deliberately, thankfully this number is small. No, what I'm referring to here is the more subtle feelings of humiliation that teenagers are likely to experience.

You see, teenagers are highly sensitive to external influences... They are likely to feel humiliated if you correct them, or tell them they're wrong in the presence of others: you do this at your own risk...! Don't make your young person feel smaller than he or she is.



If you are fortunate to have a young person open up to you, be careful about dismissing your teen's thoughts, fears, hopes and dreams. Listen carefully, acknowledge and even if you don't agree...give some realistic but positive/hopeful feedback

Tip Number 7

Remember...I may not be as articulate as you would like.

This means that the young person is unlikely to be able to express him or herself easily or as well as he or she, or you, would like. Patience, patience, patience... as difficult as it might be sometimes... patience is



the key. Listen, encourage, be open to hear. Don't put your teen off when she or he asks questions or talks in a way that you might think is silly... do this too often, and they may stop asking...and stop communicating even more than they do now.

Tip Number 8.

Please remember...adolescence is about experimentation...

The stage of adolescence is about trying out new things. It's about learning what the young person likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.

Adolescence is the time of breaking away from family to find their place in the world. One way of doing that is to know what, and who, they're attracted to... what they like doing, don't like doing. This is an essential aspect of teenage years.

However, it can also be a time of potential danger. You see, the adolescent wants to try out new things, but we know that the human brain hasn't yet developed at that stage, to make fully informed, rational choices. So, this is the time when the adolescent is likely to 'try out' new friends (read, peer influence), new things (read alcohol and drugs), new experiences (read clubs and pubs)... and so on.



This is why it's so important that in providing the space for your young person to experiment and find his or her place in the world, you also set clear limits or boundaries...see Tip Number 2.

Number 9.

Despite my behaviour and 'attitude', please give me Love, Understanding and Affection

It is highly likely that at some point in the teenage years, you might think of you young person as a challenge to say the least, and perhaps at times, a pain!

But, it is absolutely essential that while teenagers are experimenting, finding their place in the world, forming their personal identity, understanding who they are sexually, and where they fit in society, that they continue to feel loved and accepted. Remember, it is highly unlikely that they are being a 'challenge' or being a 'pain' to deliberately provoke you... removing your love and understanding from the young person is likely to give a signal of being unwanted, which may then drive them further from the family, into a circle where they do feel accepted.



Tip Number 10.

Keep the door open

When parents / caregivers come to counselling because of issues with their young person, it is often at the point where there are severe behavioural problems in the family. And it is usually at the point where the parents are at the point of what the Americans call 'hard love'.

Now I won't go into the pros and cons of 'hard love', but I will say that sometimes in setting boundaries, your young person will over-step them...which may mean an emotional or behavioural disconnection or estrangement between members of the family. While this may occur, the key here is to ensure that you 'keep the door open': if you lose touch with your teenager, don't banish him or her from your presence or home. Yes, if he or she wishes to be in your home, then your young person may need to follow rules and adhere to boundaries, but keeping the door open to them, emotionally and behaviourally, allows them to show you that they are ready... or at least perhaps, more ready than they were...

Being the parent or caregiver of an adolescent is not an easy task, and as I said in the first part of this series, it is fraught with danger.

Contact us at inSync for life if you would like further information on anything in this series, or if you would like to discuss issues you might be having with your young person.

We have a number of highly experienced clinicians and we're here to support you.

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