

REGIONAL PARENTING SERVICE

Ariston Parent and Play Centre

245-249 Pakington St

Newtown VIC 3220

PO Box 104

Geelong VIC 3220

Ph: 5227 0819 Fax: 5227 0832

TEENAGE BEHAVIOUR

There is currently a lot of focus on the parenting of preschool and school age children with advice and guidance readily available from a variety of sources. This is beneficial as good relationships and parenting skills established in the early years form a helpful basis for parenting teenagers. But parenting a teenager is different to parenting a school aged child. Super Nanny' stops nannying as soon as the children are taller and bigger than she is.

During the pre-teen and teenage years the behaviour of the child that we thought we knew can change dramatically. They are going through another developmental stage of their life and as 'hormones' kick in many parents perceive what they believe to be an extreme character change. Some parents feel challenged and threatened by the behaviour of this stage as their child takes the next step towards independence and being a mature being. As the behaviour can be so different from previous behaviour and challenge what has gone before many parents wonder if it is normal".

But what is 'normal'? Is there such a thing as normal? It's important to keep in mind that 'normal' is just about any character display that can be interpreted as not too out of the ordinary. 'Normal' behaviour of a 'typical teenager' can include a wide range of behaviours and it is perhaps only when the behaviour becomes extreme or unsafe that parents need to be concerned.

Most teenagers can be difficult to 'read' from one moment to the next. Their behaviour is forever changing and they may swap between being excited and ready to take on the world to being disinterested and seemingly unmotivated. At times, they may crave attention from anyone who is within their immediate area, then suddenly decide that they 'want to be alone'. It can certainly be an emotional roller coaster for everyone in the family.

So, what are the main issues parents are concerned about and what can we do to assist our teens and our family through the unknown world of adolescents? Here are some common concerns and suggestions on how to approach them;

Rudeness to Parents - don't ignore the behaviour, address it immediately

- talk with your child and explain your expectations
- find someone your child trusts to talk to if you are having difficulty finding out what is wrong.

Low Self-esteem - avoid making jokes about changes in your teen

- explain that the changes they are going through are normal
- complement your teen on their appearance

Untidiness - let your child take responsibility for their own 'domains' like their bedroom

- decide on how much help and reminding you are going to give to your teen.

Communication Breakdown

- understand that your teen may be confused about their thoughts and unable to express them to you – be patient and give them time to sort their thoughts out as well as opportunity to discuss them openly with you.

- make the time to listen to your teenager and show respect for their point of view

Discipline - Have clear boundaries and consequences, these may change as your child gets older.

- Respect their need for privacy, but still monitor them.
- Don't use sarcasm or put downs – be logical when boundaries have been overstepped.

During this time it is important that parents continue to have a positive relationship with their child and to act as role models by practicing the values and beliefs that they value. Parenting "by example" becomes an important skill - open communication, respect for others views and property, responsibility for one's self and actions and being there.

However, if parents are concerned at any stage about their teenager's behaviour or development, they should not hesitate to seek further assistance through their GP, school support person or other professional.