

# Guiding and supporting young people

During the teenage years young people are growing and changing quickly. They are exploring their identity, building skills to shape their own lives and working out their values and place in the world. While their parenting needs may be changing, your role is as important as ever. They still need your love and guidance as they learn to make their own decisions and take more responsibility for their lives. Staying closely connected helps them feel more secure and confident. It's a great opportunity to positively influence the adult they will become.

## Young people

In the preteen and teenage years young people's bodies, thinking and emotions undergo significant change (see Parent Easy Guide 'Adolescent development').

Young people are:

- becoming more aware of their body/appearance
- working out their values and who they are
- practising making their own decisions
- learning to manage their emotions and behaviour



- exploring relationships, sexuality and gender
- trying new things and thinking about their future.

## How can parents help?

All young people need to know they matter and are loved for who they are.

- Be warm and loving. Tell them often you love them no matter what.
- Spend regular time together and show an interest in things that interest them.
- Be relaxed and easy to talk to - take opportunities to talk, eg in the car, on a walk, sharing tasks. Really listen, even if their views differ from yours.
- Give your full attention when they want to talk. Be open to discussing sensitive topics, eg relationships, sexuality, gender, sex, drugs and alcohol.
- Always reconnect if there have been upsets, anger or harsh words.

## A strong connection and good communication are key to supporting your young person.



### Friends and social groups

Having friends and being accepted by peers and social groups is very important to young people. It helps them gain social skills, share ideas and work out their values and identity.

- Get to know and welcome their friends into your family.
- Listen to any friendship worries; help them think about possible solutions.
- Try not to criticise their friends. If you have any concerns, you could ask questions that help them think about the friend's behaviour.

### Safety

Taking risks and trying new things is a natural part of young people's development. New experiences can help them learn and build skills and confidence. However, the part of the brain responsible for thinking about safety and the outcome of their actions is still developing. They will need your help with this.

- Ask how they plan to stay safe when not at home. Suggest things they may not have thought of.
- Make sure they're aware of online risks and where to find reliable information, eg eSafety Commissioner website.

### What else can you do?

- Model the behaviour you expect.
- Provide a secure home base.
- Give opportunities to make their own decisions.

- Be clear about what you expect and why – involve them in setting limits.
- Inspire young people to achieve their best.

## Help your young person follow their interests and dreams. Talk about what these are and how they might achieve them.



### Seeking help

If you have any concerns about your young person's wellbeing, it's important to reach out early for help, eg family, friends, GP, youth service.

Looking after your own health and wellbeing is important too. Young people will see you respect and value yourself.

Note: The term 'Parents' in this Guide refers to anyone caring for and/or raising children and young people.

## Want more information?

Scan the QR Code to see the full version of this Parent Easy Guide.



### Parenting SA

All Parent Easy Guides are reviewed by relevant organisations/agencies and approved by the Department of Human Services.

[www.parenting.sa.gov.au](http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au)

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia.

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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