



**TEENAGERS  
AND MENTAL  
HEALTH**

# STRUGGLE OF ADOLESCENCE

- Important transition phase from childhood to adulthood; teenagers will often bounce back and forward between the two
- Learning to separate from parents
- Peers become very important
- This can be painful for parents, however, with understanding, this is the path towards healthy independence



# **UNDERSTANDING TEENAGERS (TRYING TO....!!)**

- Continued emotional challenges of younger years - at times will need to return to their 'safe base' with parents/caregivers
- Internal battle against doing this as they are striving for independence at the same time
- Can leave parents feeling unsure of their role; pulled close and pushed away (sometimes multiple times a day!!)
- Have to face the reality of not yet having the resources (physically and emotionally) to be able to do things in the way they would like to
- All of this combined with hormonal changes can result in a very challenging time, putting strain on the relationship between teenagers and parents

**IT IS HARD, FOR BOTH OF YOU**

# GOOD ENOUGH PARENTING

- YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT!!
- Perfect parenting is not achievable.
- Develops resilience
- Learn how to deal with mistakes and difficult emotions by watching how their parents respond and cope....this continues from infancy to adolescence

## THE GOOD NEWS.....

- Children learn how to deal with the world more effectively by experiencing the ups and downs of lives and relationships alongside a parent who can be honest and open about their mistakes

## **SIGNS OF (POSSIBLE) DIFFICULTY**

- Disturbed sleep (too much or too little)
- Withdrawing from normal activities
- Mood swings
- Loss of enjoyment
- Isolating self
- Feeling anxious or low in mood
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach pains

All of these could be very normal ups and downs of life – however, if they persist and its difficult to find a cause then further support should be sought.

Even if they come and go, as they do in all of us, they can be helped by supportive parenting...



# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR TEENAGER

- Talk to them, even if they resist, little and often can be helpful - keep communication open
- Be creative
- Don't put pressure on them to open up quickly or fully
- Be emotionally honest – don't be afraid to name emotions and say the difficult things
- Be the parent, not the best friend
- Boundaries will inevitably be pushed against and tested, approaching the young person with empathy for what they are experiencing can be helpful
- Consider with the young person if it would be helpful to talk to school/GP/other agencies together



# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR TEENAGER....

- Listen and acknowledge their views and feelings – even if you don't agree with them
- Fight the urge to problem solve for them
- **BE PRESENT** – remove distractions such as phones and emails etc
- Consider dedicating a set time where you will be available without distraction for them to come to you
- Have support for yourself, away from the child, so that you can be available for them without putting your own emotions on to them
- Selfcare is important for all of us!

# SELF-CARE TIPS

- Eat well
- Get enough sleep
- Get active
- Take time to do things you enjoy
- Do something creative
- Do things that help you relax such as watching TV or spending time with friends
- Connect with others – This is so important!!
- Ask for help if you need it

Self-care is important for all of us, no matter what age we are. If you can build this into your own routine it may encourage your child to do the same.



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

- Raise your concerns with your child
- Try and talk to school/GP/other agencies together
- Consider and explore interventions which may be helpful such as therapy, mental health apps etc
- Research interventions and providers
- **If you feel that you are in emergency situation, then call emergency services for help**

# SUMMARY

- Being a teenager is tough
- Being parents to a teenager is tough!!!
- Be the consistent, reliable and safe adult - you can be 'good enough' (which is arguably better than perfect and more achievable!)
- If you don't know what to say, just be available to listen – you don't need to solve every problem for them
- Be brave enough to have difficult conversations when possible – it will model for them how to deal with emotions and that they can be shared
- Model selfcare and try to structure this into your own routine whenever possible
- If you are concerned then reach out for help – school, GP, charities, therapy, mental health apps or the emergency services at time of crisis

# USEFUL RESOURCES

- Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/help-for-teenagers-young-adults-and-students/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/youth-mental-health/>
- Young Minds: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>
- Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/>  
Phone: 0800 1111
- Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org/>  
Phone: 116 123
- BACP therapists:  
<https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/therapists>
- Counselling directory: <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>

**In an emergency call 999**