



Parents Dealing with Being Parents

Check all that apply to you...

Communication Obstacles

- Does your teen struggle with household expectations?
- Does your teen argue with everything you say?
- Do they attempt to manipulate people in your family?
- Do you feel that you cannot trust your teen at times?
- Does every conversation you have with your teen end in an argument?
- Do you feel constantly tense around your teen?
- Do you find yourself stressed about what to say to your teen?
- Does your teen avoid being around the family?

Drug & Alcohol Struggles

- Has your teen stopped wanting to participate in activities they used to love?
- Has your teen ever stolen money or valuables?
- Are they secretive about what they are doing when they are out?
- Has your teen ever come home intoxicated or high to the point where you feared for their safety?
- Are you concerned that their lifestyle may be interfering with school?
- Has there been a change in peers that you may be concerned about?
- Do you suspect your teen is having unprotected sex?
- Have you ever witnessed your teen being violent?

Mental Health Concerns

- Does your teen express feelings of hopelessness or despair?
- Have you noticed a change in eating habits?
- Does your teen complain of constant headaches or stomach aches?
- Are they isolating themselves from the world?
- Does your teen have difficulty making decisions?
- Does your teen start crying for no apparent reason?
- Have you noticed a change in personal hygiene?
- Has your teen ever expressed notions of suicide?

Total number of boxes checked _____



Based on the number of checked boxes, some strategies you can try are:

Up to 8

Life with a teenager can get pretty frustrating. You want to protect them from making the wrong decisions, while still giving them the freedom to make their own choices. It may just be a matter of trying out some new communication strategies (see below).

9 to 15

At this point, it is possible that some major changes need to happen in the home for there to be peace in the home. Looking closely at the family dynamic and how everyone communicates with each other is an important step at this point. There also could be other factors including alcohol, drugs and mental health concerns prohibiting good communication (see below).

16 to 24

There are most likely some very serious issues going on in this family dynamic. Factors such as alcohol, drugs and mental health concerns are most likely a major barrier to having this family function well. Seeking professional help at this point is strongly advised (see below).

Communication Obstacles

The way you communicate with your teen will contribute to the kind of relationship you have with your teen. Teenagers are trying to find a place in the world that stems away from all things child and all things adult. Try some of these communication strategies with your teenager.



If you want to speak to your teenager about something you know will be difficult, choose a time where no one is in a rush to be anywhere and no one is busy doing something. Tell your teen you would like to spend some time talking with them and set a time aside that is best for both.

Ask for them to listen to you as you speak and tell them that you would like to hear what they have to say after you have finished speaking. When you have said what you want to say, give them their time to speak without interruptions!

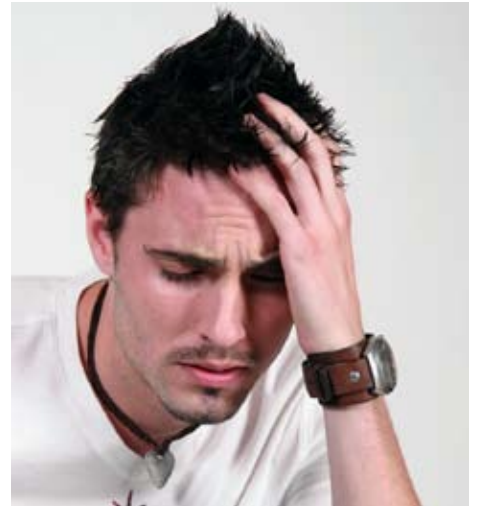
Keep your conversation short and focus on the goal of the conversation. Try not to bombard them with too many expectations. Focus on one thing and try to achieve a compromise for that specific thing.

Decide what you really want from your teenager at the end of the conversation. Do you want them to do better in school? Do you want them to spend more time at home? Keep it simple, but be specific. Let them know what is important to you.

Drug & Alcohol Struggles

Experimentation and rebellion is often apart of being a teenager. However, the use of drugs and alcohol can have a huge impact on the whole family; and when the use of these substances impacts a teenager's dreams and future; it is a problem that should not be taken lightly.

Using the communication strategies, try to talk to your teen. In this instance, try to stay away from accusations. Instead, just state the facts eg; "I have noticed that Thursday, Friday and Saturday you came home past 4am in the morning."



When chatting with your teen, tell them how you are feeling. You can do this by using statements that claim the emotion as yours "I feel scared and anxious when you don't come home on time", instead of "You scare me when you don't come home on time".

Consider why your teen might be using drugs or alcohol in the first place, is it boredom? Curiosity? Stress? Avoiding something? Trying to fit in socially? This insight could help you in trying to communicate to your teen.

Keep in mind environmental factors! Peer pressure, the media and adolescent attitudes and views can play a role in why a teen starts using and why they continue to use. Communication with a teen that is using can be very frustrating and difficult. Try using 'active listening'.

Active Listening means to really listen to what the person is saying and not just hear them. When people use active listening, they respond to what they other person has said by using an empathetic response. Use 'I statements' to help them understand what you're concerned about.

Praise your teen when they make good choices. It may sound cliché, but putting value on someone's choices can open the lines of communication. Think about it, if someone praises you, it means they probably respect you and respect leads to communication.

Decide together with your teenager what the next steps will be. Do they need help for their substance use, and are they willing to get help? An addictions counsellor or a group for teens that address substance use may be beneficial.

Mental Health Concerns

Everyone has experiences that bring unhappiness into their lives. Most people experience some type of depression at some point in their lives. It is when this state becomes prolonged and begins affecting a person's everyday life that there is cause for concern.

Being mentally healthy is not just the absence of mental illness. Throughout a person's life their emotional health can fluctuate, depending on events and relationships they encounter. Add to that the emotional volatility of being a teenager and it is common to see a very tumultuous time in the best circumstances.



If emotional changes affect your teen's life, ie; skipping school regularly or losing a job, they might need help in one form or another.

There are five key characteristics when looking at the mental health of your teen. You can talk about these together with your teenager and ask them how they see themselves.

1. **Ability to enjoy life** – are they able to learn from the past and plan for the future without dwelling on things out of their control?
2. **Resiliency** – are they able to bounce back from hard times?
3. **Balance** – how are they at juggling many different aspects of their life?
4. **Self esteem** – do they recognize their strengths and want to build on their potential?
5. **Flexibility** – when problems come up, can they adapt to solve the problem and feel better?

Some things to consider regarding Mental Health Concerns:

- 1 in 5 people will experience a Mental Health issue at some point in their lives
- Anxiety is the most common Mental Health issue, affecting 1 in 10
- Mental Health concerns can be attributed to many different factors such as genetic predisposition or family history, death or illness of someone close, traumatic events experienced, and our resiliency factors to stress and other things

It can be very stressful to have a family member with a mental illness. A common response is to try to deal with the problem alone. People may isolate themselves so they can avoid the stigma that may come about when friends and neighbours find out about 'our secret'.

However, keeping the problem in the family is not the best approach. The best way to deal with mental illness in the family is to link up with other families who are in a similar situation. The more you talk about it, the more resources you will find to help. Your family doctor is a good place to begin if you decide professional help is the best course of action.

Website Links

St. Leonard's Community Services London Region (SLCS) is dedicated to promoting positive change in all persons who are or could be in conflict with the law to realize their potential, leading to a safer community.

www.slcs.ca



mindyourmind.ca is an award winning website for youth by youth. The site provides tools, resources and information to help young people and their peers during tough times.

www.mindyourmind.ca



The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a nationwide, charitable organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

www.cmha.ca



Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) works to improve the mental health and well-being of children and youth and their families. You will find a listing of all children's mental health centres in Ontario.

www.kidsmentalhealth.ca



By addressing a variety of subjects through the website, the program hopes to encourage youth throughout Canada to make healthy, informed decisions and to get involved in their communities.

www.deal.org



Addiction Services of Thames Valley provides early intervention to persons who are concerned about substance use and/or problem gambling.

www.adstv.on.ca



Connex provides information and referrals to services in Ontario for gambling, addictions and mental health issues.

www.connexontario.ca

