

# Connecting with your teenager

Social distancing has meant parents and teens are being forced to spend more time together. The stereotype of the teenager is either a monosyllabic boy or a girl behind a slammed shut bedroom door. Whilst there is some validity to this, it is far from the whole story. Adolescence is a time of change, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. The transition from being a child to adult is not always easy. In this era of social media and smart phones, there are additional pressures.

Parents often lament that their teenagers do not listen, and they may be right. However, communication is a two-way street. This means listening is as important (possibly more so) than talking to your teens. We know that teenagers (despite what they may say) are still wanting guidance and parental support. Whilst publicly they may claim to know it all, deep down there is still insecurity.

Look for common interests. Talk about topics that they raise. Be prepared to talk when they are ready to open up about a situation (even if you are doing something else). Be opportunistic. When driving to school or other places you have a captive audience. This can be a good time to talk. Aim to sit down for dinner with your teen at least a few times a week. Talk around the dinner table can be revealing. No matter how many times the answer is nothing much, ask each day how was school or what happened in your day?

Communication is the key to connecting. Ask your own parents how they coped with you. Talk to your doctor about any concerns you have about your teenager.

