

# Teenagers

## Aboriginal Parent Easy Guide

The teenage years can be an exciting time of change for children. It can be a rollercoaster as they experiment, learn new things and work out who they are and their place in the world.

### In the pre-teen and teenage years:

- > children's bodies and emotions change quickly
- > they want to 'fit in' with their friends
- > they test limits and take risks – but the part of the brain that helps them predict what will happen, is still developing. They may do silly and dangerous things
- > there can be a lot going on with family, school, friends or work
- > there may be bullying or racism.

### Teenagers need:

- > good relationships with family
- > a trusted adult they can really talk to
- > good role models
- > help to make good decisions and deal with problems
- > chances to practice being responsible
- > support when someone passes away
- > help to be healthy and safe
- > to feel connected to culture and community.



A loving family can help teenagers deal with the ups and downs of life.

Even when children think they are a 'big man' or 'big woman', they still need your guidance, love and support.

**Parents are important to teenagers, even if it doesn't always seem that way.**

Teenagers need you to:

- > be someone they can trust and rely on.  
Only make promises you can keep
- > really listen to them.

Talk with them about:

- > how they are feeling
- > treating people with respect
- > being responsible
- > taking risks
- > staying safe and healthy.
- > Helping around the home

As they get older make sure they have good information about drugs and alcohol, mental health, safe sex and contraception. If they don't want to talk with you about these things, make sure they have another trusted adult to talk to – Uncle, Aunty, other family member or friend.

Try to:

- > know what's going on in their life
- > help them have friends, interests and activities
- > praise and celebrate their successes.

If there is bullying or racism, tell teenagers:

- > the problem is with the other person – not them
- > to stay calm and not put themselves in danger – talk about safe ways of handling things
- > to come to you or another trusted adult for help.

**You are a role model for your children. Let them see you making positive choices in your own life.**



*Help teenagers to eat well and not have too much junk food. They need to be active and not spend too much time watching TV and other screens.*

**Teenagers' sleep**

Teenagers often sleep late in the morning and have trouble getting up for school. Changes in hormones mean they get tired later at night and tend to sleep in. It helps to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends, to have regular exercise and limit caffeine. A 20 minute nap also helps. Turn off computer games and phones, and relax before bed.

### Teenage behaviour

It's OK to have rules about teenagers' behaviour. It keeps them safe as they become more responsible. Rules could be about:

- > how they treat others
- > helping around the house
- > keeping school and work commitments
- > where they go and who they spend time with
- > what time they come home
- > letting you know where they are.

Agree on rules together and what will happen if they are broken. Keep consequences reasonable and short.

### Arguments

There can be arguments when teenagers push limits. Try to:

- > stay calm – don't shout back
- > listen to their point of view
- > tell them why you think things are important, such as respect, caring for others and sharing responsibilities – try not to lecture.

When things calm down talk about what went wrong and what else you both could have done. Help them deal with any issues and find help if they need it.

All families argue at times but violence or abuse is never OK. If your child is violent towards you or others, get help. If you are in immediate danger call the police on 000.

### If there is anger or violence:

- > don't retaliate – it makes things worse
- > be clear you do not allow violence or abuse
- > keep yourself and others safe. If there is immediate danger, call the police on 000.

### When to get help for your child

Most teenagers cope with support from family and friends. Your child may need extra help if they:

- > feel low much of the time
- > lack energy or motivation
- > are angry a lot
- > lash out or are violent to people or pets
- > feel worthless or guilty
- > self-harm or talk about suicide
- > are using drugs or alcohol.

Your doctor or Aboriginal health service is a good place to start.

Tell children you love them even if you don't like what they do.



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### Helplines

#### Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52

9am - 9pm weekdays and 4pm - 9pm weekends for advice on child health and parenting.

#### Kids Helpline

Phone 1800 551 800, 24 hours

Telephone and web counselling for young people aged 5–25 years.

[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

#### Beyond Blue

Phone 1300 224 636 or 03 9810 6100

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

The Beyond Blue website has fact sheets and information on mental health, and a Web Chat service 7 days a week from 4pm to 10pm or you can call them 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 to speak to a Beyond Blue counsellor.

#### Legal Aid NSW

Phone 1300 888 529

Free legal advice and information.

[www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

**Mental Health Access Line:** 1800 011 511

**Domestic Violence Line:** 1800 656 463

**SIDS and Kids:** 1300 308 307

**Safe sleeping for babies:** [www.sidsandkids.org](http://www.sidsandkids.org)

**Child Abuse Report Line:** 131 478, 24 hours

If you are worried a child is being abused or neglected. You can ask to speak to an Aboriginal worker if available.

**Healthdirect:** 1300 022 222, 24 hours to speak to a nurse.

[www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)

#### Australian Indigenous Health Infonet:

Information for parents and workers on a variety of Aboriginal topics.

[www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/sewworkers/grief-loss-trauma/key-facts](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/other-health-conditions/sewworkers/grief-loss-trauma/key-facts)

**Mensline Australia:** 1300 789 978, 24 hours

Speak to someone about relationship or family concerns.

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

**Healthy Minds:** 1300 137 237

Healthy Minds allows people who have a health care card to access a psychologist at no cost. You will need to go to your GP and ask for a Healthy Minds referral under the 'Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS)', and your GP will have a list of participating psychologists that they can refer you to.

### Websites

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For parenting information [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

#### Reachout

Helps under 25s with everyday questions through to tough times.

<https://au.reachout.com/>

### Mentoring

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME): Mentoring for Aboriginal high school and university students.

[www.aimementoring.com/about/aim](http://www.aimementoring.com/about/aim)

### Local Services

#### Aboriginal Legal Service Lismore:

Phone 1800 643 - ALS Lismore

3/15 Molesworth Street, Lismore NSW 2480

Phone: 02 6623 4400

#### Headspace

We help young people aged between 12 and 25 who are going through a tough time.

Phone 02 6625 0200

#### Gurgun Bulahnggelah Aboriginal Health (Jullums)

Phone 02 6621 4366

Provides a range of medical and general health services, including counselling referrals and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and adults.

[www.gurgun.com.au](http://www.gurgun.com.au)

#### Aboriginal Outreach Worker and Counsellor - Interrelate

Phone 02 6623 2750

Yarning and counselling, running health and wellbeing workshops, and empowering people to make positive and healthier life choices.

*Refer to Service Listing for contact details of other local services*