

## **TEENS AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**Raising adolescents can be a stressful and difficult time for many families. It's important to remember that the physical and psychological changes your teenage child is going through can be stressful and overwhelming for them, their peers and other family members.**

**However, there is a strong link between the quality of parent-teenager relationships and adolescent mental health. Healthy and constructive family relationships can help in reducing the chances of your child experiencing mental health problems.**

**Adolescence is a sometimes scary and stressful time for both young people and parents alike, and it can feel utterly overwhelming, but in most cases it is a crucial but temporary development phase that just needs careful management by attentive parents.**

### ***Ways to support good mental health in teenagers***

- Take an active interest in your teenager's life by asking about their day, listening to them talk about their social or school life and to what they have to say.
- Show them your love for them through affection, praise and affirmation. Encourage them to try new things or excel in their chosen sport or hobbies.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings and experiences with you. It's important for them to feel supported and know they're not alone.

Don't downplay their emotions or experiences; even though you probably remember going through these feelings yourself, the last thing they want to hear is that what they're feeling isn't significant.

- Encourage new experiences but negotiate and discuss boundaries with your teenager. Begin to treat them like the adult they are fast becoming. They will notice and value you extending this respect to them, and it will be a reassurance to them that you understand the changes they're going through.
- Talk to family members, teachers, a GP or other parents if you have concerns about them, but make sure you are also talking with, and listening to them.

### ***If you are concerned about your teenager's mental health***

• Let them know that you are worried about them and that you care for them. Remind them of your love for them, but reassure them that you are ready to support them in a way they feel comfortable. Make sure they understand that you aren't angry with them and they aren't in trouble.

• Tell your teen that talking is often the best medicine and remind yourself that the other crucial ingredient is for them to have someone who will listen to them. Sometimes this might not be you or their other parent.

Make sure they know that you will support them and assist them in speaking to another trusted individual if that would be more comfortable for them. That might be an aunt or uncle, a grandparent or even just an independent third party, like a school counsellor.

• If you think your child should see a GP, remind them that anything they tell a GP is confidential, unless the GP is worried they're going to hurt themselves or someone else. The same thing applies to other external specialist support services, like Headspace.

