



The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC FOR PARENTS OF 13-17-YEAR-OLD TEENAGERS

TOOL: Prevention

TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents of 13-17-year-old teenagers

TOOL INTENDED FOR: Parents

DESIGN

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– Details: E.g. Parents of 13-17-year-old teenagers.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

– Parents of 13-17-year-old teenagers.

NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS

- Parent-teen relationships
- Bond with adults during adolescence – need for distance and independence
- Behaviours: heightened sensitivity, opposition

SPECIFIC GOALS

- To understand the importance of maintaining parent-teen relationships.
- To understand the potential impact of the pandemic on parent-teen relationships.
- To develop basic strategies for developing and maintaining positive parent-teen relationships.

DESIGN

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC – FOR PARENTS OF 13-17-YEAR-OLD TEENAGERS

The new pandemic reality in which your family lives may influence the quality of your relationship with your child. In some cases, the situation has enabled families to spend more time together and experience activities that are usually difficult to do. However, the pandemic period may be conducive to the appearance of stressors in everyone's life, such as the fear of being sick or transmitting the disease, routine changes, decreased network support, not being able to see friends, financial concerns, etc. So it's completely normal for your teen to be more concerned and sometimes less available.

In this context, the quality of parent-teen relationships plays an essential role. In quality relationships, parents are **responsive** to their teen's cues and try to interpret the meaning of and adjust to their teen's behaviour. In addition, parents will be able to adjust their response based on their teen's reactions (1).

To maintain quality relationships, parents may also try to adjust to the emotions experienced and expressed by their teens, even if they are more frequent or intense and sometimes seem trivial to adults.

Providing a sensitive response to teens' needs may reduce the tension with parents at this time. While adolescence is an important transition phase in development, relationships with parents change significantly and time spent with peers greatly increases. Emotional and physical distance with parents develops, but that doesn't mean that the ties are broken. Needs change and the desire for autonomy increases. The desire for peer recognition, the desire to acquire status and the desire to belong to a group are needs that become more pronounced during adolescence (1).

Although friends often play a greater role in teenagers' lives, the warmth of contact between teens and their parents is equally important. Without asking directly, teens may frequently feel the need to have their thoughts and feelings validated. Parents should remain vigilant of and respond kindly to their needs for reassurance, whether explicit or not.

It's therefore essential to maintain meaningful relationships with parents (discussion, interaction, support). The family is the basic social structure around which new structures develop. There is thus a mutual influence between the two systems; one is no more important than the other. Parents are a resource in the event of difficulties or distress. It should also be noted that the quality of relationships with parents influences the quality of relationships with peers.



Adjust your expectations to your teens' need for independence while continuing to tell them that they are important to you and that you care about them. For example, on Friday nights, teens may no longer want to participate in movie night with their families so that they can go and see their friends. However, there may be new expectations, such as attending family dinner on Sunday evenings.

Dinnertime can be the ideal moment for quality time. By establishing the rule that the entire family gathers to eat together at the kitchen table, it will be an appropriate time to chat and interact with teens. Ask them about their day; show interest in their interests even if they aren't always the same as yours. However, it's important to be able to recognize the signs that your teens want to maintain some privacy (1).

Show your teens affection with words or actions as often as possible. This can include a hand on the shoulder, an "I love you," a hug before leaving in the morning, a smile, etc. Your teens still need these signs of affection, even if they would have you believe otherwise (1).

Even if teens are more interested in doing activities or chatting with friends, plan quality time with them. Despite the current situation, a variety of activities may be possible:

- Playing board games
- Playing soccer
- Playing cards
- Camping in the yard
- Going for a walk
- Going to eat ice cream
- Gardening
- Cycling
- Listening to a movie
- Cooking a meal together that they have chosen
- Etc.



As an adult, remember to take care of yourself, so that you can take better care of your teen.

- **Give yourself time to relax.**
- **Don't hesitate to ask for help if necessary (5).**
- **Some resources are suggested at the end of this document.**

If you or your teen are feeling a high level of stress, go to the anxiety capsule to find various tips and advice.



To maintain quality relationships with your teens at all times (and even more so during the pandemic), the following are some key behaviours:

- Try to establish clear, negotiated rules and boundaries (depending on the teens' age), while making sure to meet your teens' needs. It's important to find the right balance between firmness and warmth. Make sure you are consistent and predictable in your demands and in enforcing logical consequences if necessary (1).
- Be available to help teens manage their emotions, if necessary. They may want and need to experience them alone, but you can still let them know that you're there for them if needed. Normalize the emotions experienced, without trivializing them. For example, if your daughter breaks up with her boyfriend and cries all the time, you could say to her, "You're really sad; it's normal. I know you loved him very much. I just wanted to tell you that you can talk about it with me if you feel like it" (1).
- Be open to discussion and seek compromise. Teens will feel you understand their needs (1). However, certain rules should be non-negotiable, particularly when they may have an impact on their safety. On the other hand, you can come to an agreement for other rules. For example, for outings with friends, you could say, "I'll let you go out with your friends on Friday night. However, I'd like you to tell me where you'll be and let me know if you change places."





USEFUL RESOURCES

LigneParents: 1 800-361-5085

Info-Social: 811

Maison de la famille in your area: [Dial 211 to find the resource near you](#)

Entraide Parent – Support line: [418-684-0050](#)

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