

Adolescent Mental Health

Adolescence is a time of change, growth, and learning. Adolescence can also pose a myriad of challenges to both teens and parents. Our research-supported strategies can help you navigate these challenges, foster a closer relationship with your teen and prioritize their mental health.

Adolescence is defined as the developmental period between childhood and adulthood (ages 13-18) where children experience physical, social, and emotional change and growth. The rate at which each individual develops, and what that development specifically looks like, can be different for each person. Everyone is different.



🔍 Changes in the following categories are **normal** and **expected**



Mood



Sleep cycle



Temperament



Social media use



Sexuality



Relationships



Distinct changes in emotions and behaviors that cause concern and persist over weeks or months could indicate the need for **mental health intervention**.

Depression, anxiety, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and adjustment challenges are among the common mental health concerns that present in adolescence. These concerns can show up differently in the adolescent population vs. the adult population. Consistent irritability, defiance, and withdrawal can be signs your teen is struggling.

It is always ok to reach out for support.

Consider these concrete skills to support you in parenting your teen:

- **Validation:** Acknowledge and validate your teen's emotions (though not necessarily their behavior), regardless of whether you would share the same feelings in their situation.
- **Distress tolerance:** Model coping with difficult situations in a mindful way, with an emphasis on de-escalating emotions in the moment, rather than turning immediately to problem-solving.
- **Relationship building:** Take steps to strengthen your bond with your teen in a developmentally appropriate way through clear communication and shared activities that can reduce risk of heated conflict when disagreements arise.
- **Behavior change:** Help encourage positive behaviors through praise and reinforcement, and discourage negative behaviors through playful consequences that align with your family's values.
- **Acceptance:** Adolescence is complicated! The less you fight against this and the more you can embrace normal ups and downs, the better you'll feel about yourself as a parent and your family as you grow together.



Reflection Exercise

As a teen, what were you struggling with? What were you proud of?



Skills Practices

Validation

What is a statement you can use to validate your teen's feelings during a difficult situation?

Distance Tolerance

What can you do to help yourself and your teen relax during a tense moment?



Skills Practices

Relationship building

What is a positive activity you and your teen can do together to bring you closer?

Behavior change

What is a value that is important to your family (e.g. kindness, respect) that you might focus on when implementing value-based consequences?



Reflection Exercise

What are the top two skills you would like to implement from this workshop that will work best for your family and how will you get started?

1.

2.
