

Positive Parenting

The Changing Relationship

The relationship with your child undergoes many major changes throughout the course of his or her lifetime. It gradually evolves from one of total dependence to one of independence. Our goal for our children is for them to eventually learn to live on their own. Our parental role in this process is to provide guidance but at the same time give them the freedom to make choices, encourage them to take responsibility for their actions, help them learn from their mistakes, and celebrate their successes.

Every child matures at a different rate, even within the same family. Other factors that may influence this rate of development are childhood experiences, emotional maturity, learning disabilities and physical handicaps. As parents we need to read the signals that each child gives indicating they are ready to begin the process of separating.

Teenage Signals

- privacy becomes very important
- have a need to look like their peers
- want to spend more time with their friends
- are embarrassed about being seen with mom or dad
- begin distancing themselves from the family
- are less willing to share thoughts, feelings and actions
- start to make more decisions on their own
- may experiment with risky behaviour

Guidelines for Parents

- know when your child is ready – some are ready at 18 and others not until they are in their 20's
- gradually encourage independence and self confidence
- know your child's strengths and weaknesses
- encourage them to have faith in themselves
- have realistic expectations about subjects such as education and career goals
- be a good listener when your teen wants to talk

- expect them to share in the household responsibilities
- model the expected behaviour, especially around the use of drugs and alcohol
- avoid giving your teen too much advice
- maintain the house rules that are important – smoking, drinking, overnight guests
- give them the message that they don't always need an adult to make decisions
- give your teen money management skills – banking, credit card use, shopping

If the teenage years are difficult, it will still be possible to have a good relationship with your children as adults. The majority of teenagers who do become involved in some risky events turn out to be responsible adults. **DON'T GIVE UP!!!!**

The Empty Nest

Parents need to be prepared for when that day finally arrives and the role of parenting evolves into one of friendship. Moving out should be a time of celebration. It can be a positive and special experience.

- give them their space
- try not to worry too much
- decide how much time you are going to spend together
- try not to check up on them – phone occasionally
- look for opportunities to have fun together – lunch, shopping, golfing, or going to a movie
- continue to celebrate as a family but realize that it is important to be flexible in the planning

Free At Last

What have you always wanted to do but never had the time?

- start new activities – walk with a friend, join a club
- do volunteer work
- work on hobbies
- travel
- take a university/college course

Tip: Try to enjoy this time of transition, it can be very challenging but at the same time, very rewarding.