

Navigating the adolescent years with boys



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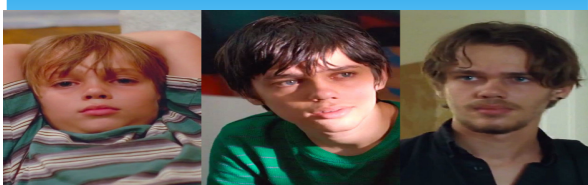


When your dog becomes a cat

“When your children are teenagers, it’s important to have a dog so that someone is happy to see you when you come home”



Understanding the transition from childhood to adolescence



- As your boy changes and grows into a young man –your relationship needs to change.
- It’s normal to want to resist this change or to be unsure how to change your relationship with your son.
- Adapting to these changes is critical to positive adolescent-parent relationships.



Adapting our parenting styles to build/maintain positive relationships

- Our involvement as parents is essential for adolescent development.
- It is reasonable for us to have some expectations of our teenagers (boundaries/limits, respect, responsibility).
- Getting the balance right.



Understanding Adolescent Boys

- Adolescents experience rapid physical, emotional and social changes.
- Things that are important to young men include:
 - developing their own ‘identity’
 - spending time with their friends/mates
 - privacy
 - independence
 - being accepted by their peers/family
 - pushing boundaries.
- Adolescent brain is still under construction – need to keep this in mind.



External Forces

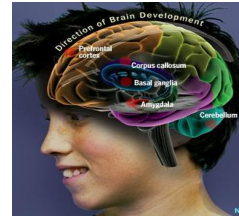


So, what's behind adolescent boys emotions and behaviour?



Teenage brain is undergoing major changes

- The limbic system/emotional brain intensifies during puberty.
- The pre-frontal cortex continues to develop until mid 20's (helps with planning, suppressing impulses, weighing up consequences).
- Inhibits teenagers ability to make decisions and judge situations well.
- Parents can help guide and influence teenagers behaviour during this time of rapid development.



Brain changes during adolescence

- Novelty seeking
- Social engagement
- Increased emotional intensity
- Creative exploration



Primed for survival



Mirror neurons

- We are hard-wired to perceive the mind of others.
- Mirror neuron system appears to get activated when we closely watch others.
- We can instantly experience a situation or a person's feelings as if it is happening to us - neurons act like we are experiencing what we observe i.e. if someone gets angry at us we "feel" angry.



Self-regulation in teenagers and ourselves

- As parents we can positively influence our teenagers ability to manage their feelings and emotions.
- Need insight into ourselves and the ability to separate our child's behaviour from our own.
- Our mirror neurons make it very easy to become dysregulated by our child's emotions/behaviours (angry child creates a response in us).
- Develop awareness of the signs of dysregulation (parent and child) and ways to manage emotions/behaviours.



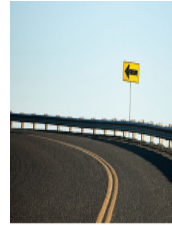
Communicating with your son

- Communication can become toxic – arguing and conflict is harmful to adolescents and us as parents.
- Both parents and teenagers become dysregulated. Not able to hear each other and just “reacting”.
- Work out what behaviours you can ignore and what needs to be managed.
- If we can manage our emotions we can have rationale conversations about problems and maintain positive relationships with our adolescent.



Tips for navigating the changes and challenges

- * Try to be receptive and responsive to the changes – not reactive.
- * Be open to changes you are seeing in your son – show interest in what they do and help guide them when they face challenges.
- * Keep the lines of communication open. Ask don't tell.
- * Repair ruptures to your relationship when they occur – don't sweat the small stuff.
- * Find ways to connect with them (side-by-side activities).



Tips to help adolescents

- * Sleep (adolescents need more sleep than adults) but try telling them that!!!!
- * Limit screen time (TV, gaming, mobile phones)
- * Downtime
- * Playtime (social engagement)
- * Physical activity
- * Connecting time (making time each week to do something together)



Connection: We need it to thrive



Relationships

- Healthy relationships are crucial to our health and wellbeing.
- We get dopamine “feel good” effect from our relationships with people. When we don't get pleasure from relationships we turn to other sources of dopamine (computer games, alcohol, drugs etc.)
- If we do this enough our brain starts to re-wire and we no longer link this “feel good” feeling with relationships.
- Leads to isolation from others and anger, irritability, depression.



Adolescent mental health

One in 16 young Australians is currently experiencing depression.

One in six young Australians is currently experiencing an anxiety condition.

One in four young Australians currently has a mental health condition.



Source: Beyond Blue
(<https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/footer/stats-and-facts>)

Recognising the warning signs of a mental health problem

New, noticeable and persistent changes lasting at least a few weeks, including:

- Not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that they would normally enjoy
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns
- Being easily irritated or angry for no reason
- Their performance at school is not as good as it should be or as it once was
- Involving themselves in risky behaviour that they would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol
- Experiencing difficulties with their concentration
- Seeming unusually stressed, worried, down or crying for no reason
- Expressing negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts

Source: Headspace

Seeking help

- Talk to your GP about a referral to see a mental health professional
- Find out more information about mental health problems and support available

Headspace

<http://headspace.org.au/>

YouthBeyondBlue

<https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>

ReachOut

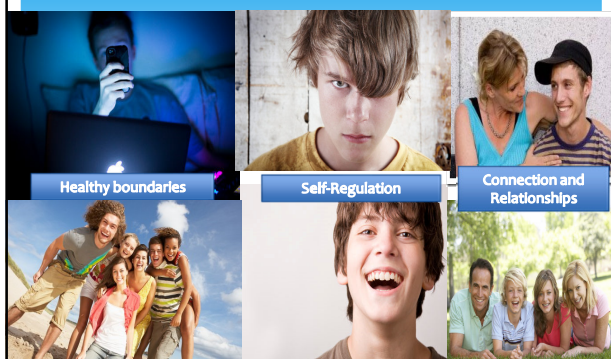
<http://au.reachout.com/>

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

<http://kidshelpline.com.au/>



Concluding Comments



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