

Parenting Teenagers – introduction (Video transcript)

Hello everybody again. We have done the introduction to parenting teenagers.

In this clip I want to re-visit the four constructs which are the building blocks for building a positive constructive relationship. That can be used to build relationships with lots of people, but for the purpose of these clips we are focussing on parenting teenagers.

If we get these building blocks right we can build a positive relationship with our teenager and we can model positive relationships and our teenagers can learn that skill.

These building blocks (if we can get them right) help with our own emotional health, which is key. If we have good emotional health we can cope with most things and that's what's key, especially in this ever changing world – with lockdown, coming out of lockdown – lots of change. Our emotional health is going to be key. Our emotional health as parents and our emotional health as children and especially teenagers.

So just to remind you as well, all of these ideas are not my ideas. I have to give credit to Family Links. They have produced this book which I refer to quite a lot, "*The Talking Teens: your guide to understanding teenagers*". And this book can be read on its own, but we also use it when we run the Talking Teens Parenting programmes. This can be accessed from familylinks.org.uk.

Please contact the Family Support Team for more information. And Family Links have worked very closely with Dr John Colman who's a guru on communication with teenagers and this book, "*Why won't my teenager talk to me?*", which is such a good book for helping to develop good relationships with teenagers. Just to let you know this is not all my stuff.

To come back to the 4 constructs.

Firstly, we have self- awareness and that is about us as parents being aware of how we react, and how this affects how our teenagers react.

If we can be aware of how we are feeling and how you react and to try to manage those feelings and react in quite a calm way, well then our teenagers may react more calmly as well.

It's not always going to work but it is about tuning in to how we're feeling, and how we behave will affect how our teenagers behave. That's the key to self-awareness.

The next one is appropriate expectations. And appropriate expectations applies to us as parents. We are never going to get it totally right. Well maybe I shouldn't say never - some parents may get it totally right. But it is difficult, especially with parenting teenagers because there is such a battle going on for teenagers. One minute they present as a child, the other minute they present as an adult. So do I treat them as a child or as an adult? They are trainee adults. So we have to guide them and help them with that as well. So be kind to ourselves and don't be too hard on ourselves.

But bear in mind: just have appropriate expectations. They may present as an adult but they are not going to act as an adult. They are not going to see the logic of having a tidy room and a place for everything and a clean space even though they are saying they are an adult. We need to have appropriate expectations; we need to remember they are trainee adults even though they think they are adults themselves.

We need to develop appropriate expectations for our teenagers. Even though they present as adults, they are probably not going to act as adults. Appropriate expectations for ourselves as parents and appropriate expectations for our teenagers. We need to be kind to ourselves as parents.

The next one is positive discipline like in some of the previous clips I did - that is really key for teenagers as well.

Sometimes we think as parents, "Oh they should know what to do now as I've been drumming it into them since they were two years old. They ought to know. I shouldn't have to keep disciplining them". When we talk about discipline, the word comes from the word disciple, which means to guide. So we still need to guide our children; we still need to be positive. Be kind, fair and consistent. Positive discipline is really good.

And the last but by no means least is empathy. "Empathy is your ace card". And if I say it once I'll say it a 100 times but that is the cornerstone to having good emotional health and good relationships. So what is empathy? Empathy is having the ability to tune in to our feelings and to our children's feelings, our teenagers' feelings or other people's feelings. Empathy is the ability to tune into other people's feelings.

Validating the feelings; you may not validate the behaviour but you're validating the feelings and then you are helping our teenagers manage those feelings.

You are helping yourselves manage those feelings. Empathy is a cornerstone and I'll give you an example.

Supposing your 13 year old teenager comes home, opens the door, slams the door shut, throws their bag on the floor. You're thinking, "Why are they knocking the door down?" That's not an effective response but it's fairly natural to us. "Why did you bang that door? Don't come in and throw your bag on the floor. Put that bag back in the cupboard". We've got a storm. You've reacted by shouting and the teenager reacts by shouting. They bang the door and we have a very negative evening probably.

But a more empathetic response could be a different story. The teenager comes home, bangs the door, throws the bag on the floor and shouts and rants and raves. There you are thinking "count to 3.... 1, 2, 3". And you say, "You seem really fed up; you seem really angry. How about pop the bag in the cupboard, get out of your uniform and I'll make a lovely hot chocolate for us and we'll have a real chat then".

So you see the difference in the response. They may still storm off and bang the door and change out of their uniform but you are feeling calmer and it's very hard to bang that door when somebody else is being that calm. And they may come down with a different frame of mind. You have your hot chocolate; you don't have to ask questions. Avoid questions; just keep validating, "You seem like you've had a tough day today", and they may talk about it. If they don't, well that's ok - talk about the lovely hot chocolate and then slowly but surely you may hear what went on that day and you may be able to resolve it.

So that's just the four constructs; the building blocks The next tip we're going to talk about - what's going on for adults, and then we going to talk about what's going on for teenagers, and then were going to pull it all together.

Thank you very much.

