

Managing your teens anger

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

The teenage years can be stressful at the best of times. It is a time of rapid growth and change for the teen, which can often have an impact on the relationship with their parents.

Connecting with peers and gaining increased freedom from parents are two of the essential developmental tasks of adolescence. This can set up parents and teens to experience conflict, as parents grow increasingly frustrated in their fight for influence, while teens can feel frustrated in their growing desire for freedom.

Here are some suggestions to help you manage your teen's anger:

1. Understand teens feel their emotions more intensely than younger children or adults

This is just the way their brain is wired! So if you are feeling worried about what is happening in the world, then your teens will feel these emotions even more strongly. They may not know what to do with these strong feelings - no teenagers before them have had to deal with what is going on in the world at the moment. They need your support and understanding.

2. Take some time to think about what your teens are going through

Try to empathise, or put yourself in their shoes. Remember what it felt like for you when you were a teenager, without the added stresses of social media or global pandemics. Teens often worry about the future, but they are currently facing uncertainty like never before. This is on top of all the usual issues they are dealing with - physical changes, peer pressure, demands of school and home and social media. All of these issues can be difficult for your teens to manage and it's often why they express their feelings with anger.

3. Try to figure out what is really underneath their anger

Anger is often described as a secondary emotion - an emotion that works to protect us from more painful underlying feelings that make us feel vulnerable. Some of these underlying emotions might be fear, disappointment, hurt, grief or anxiety. Teens are struggling to deal with significant changes and consequently, they will be feeling many of these emotions every day. It is therefore not surprising that these feelings are often expressed as anger. Try to stay calm in the face of their anger, and work to identify what they might be feeling under their anger.

4. Make time to talk with them

After you have tried putting yourself in their shoes and calmed yourself, make time to talk with them about how they are feeling. Listen carefully to what they are saying, and don't judge or minimise their feelings, just listen. Acknowledge their feelings – do they mention feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, scared or helpless? Let them know that you hear them and tell them it is ok to feel like this. If they don't want to talk to you, that's ok, just leave the invitation open to talk. Sometimes doing something together, such as going for a walk or driving together, can be a less pressured situation and lead to your child opening up to you.

5. Do what you can to support them through this time

If they need more space, give it to them. Try to help them develop a consistent routine for schoolwork, eating, sleep and exercise. Teens will no doubt want to connect with others through social media, and this should be encouraged, but still monitored. Give them time to relax and de-stress.

6. Acknowledge that being a parent of a teen is not always easy

Sometimes you won't react to your teens as well as you would like. If you have an angry outburst, repair the relationship by modelling good anger management. Apologise to them and talk about your own underlying feelings, but be gentle and forgiving on yourself too. Take time for yourself to de-stress and unwind too.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Managing Teens Anger**, or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.