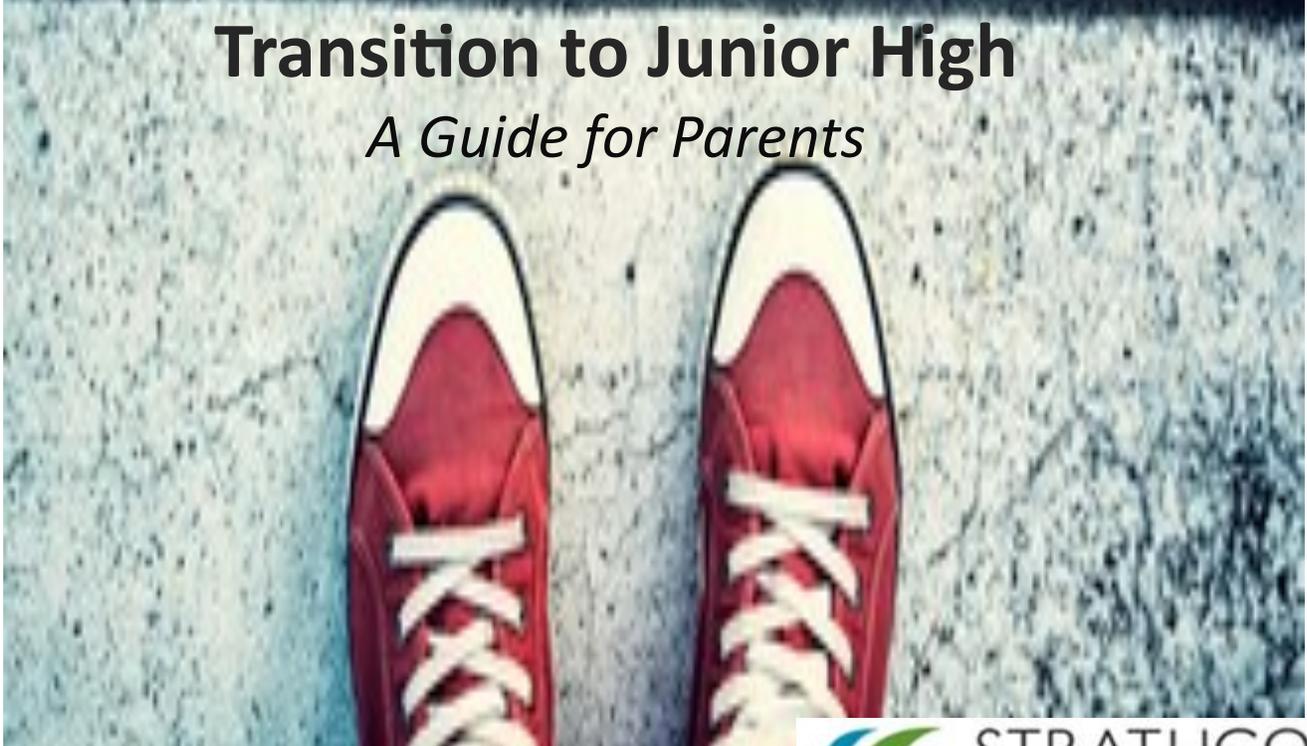




Transition to Junior High
A Guide for Parents



Purpose of This Guide

The transition from elementary to junior high can be a challenging time for both parents and teens. This guide gives parents and caregivers a resource to help support their teen and prepare them for this exciting change.

Youth are not only adjusting to new academic demands, they are also learning new ways to connect with their peers. Junior high will test their relationship skills with their peers, teachers and other adults in their lives as well. Just like academics, social skills need to be learned, practiced and role modeled.

Adults who are supportive during this transition and provide encouragement will help youth feel confident about the change.

While parents and caregivers are the most important influence in their child’s life, the community has a role in ensuring that the children feel safe, supported and connected to others.



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Further Resources on Transitions

National Education Association: Transition to Middle School—Information on supporting student transitions.

<http://www.nea.org/tools/16657.htm>

Alberta and Child Youth Initiative—Guidelines for supporting successful transitions.

<http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/egovdocs/2006/alac/158807.pdf>

Kids Health—Information about transitions to middle school.

<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/middle-school.html#>

Stress and Anxiety

What is Stress

Stress is a normal, everyday occurrence. It is our bodies response to feeling afraid, threatened, overworked, overstimulated or excited. It is important to note that what might be stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. We often think of stress primarily as a feeling, but it also has a powerful physical component.

Stress is often perceived as negative but it comes from **both good and bad events** that happen to us. A certain amount of stress is a good thing: it helps us feel alert, energized, interested in life, and can be a part of healthy development as it helps young brains and bodies prepare for larger challenges.

Too much stress, particularly when we don't have control over it, can make people unhappy and can interfere with their ability to manage everyday tasks and challenges. Stress can also lead to health problems.

Throughout this toolkit there is information and exercises for parents to assist their youth so stress is manageable, reducing the chance of large issues such as health problems.



Did You Know:

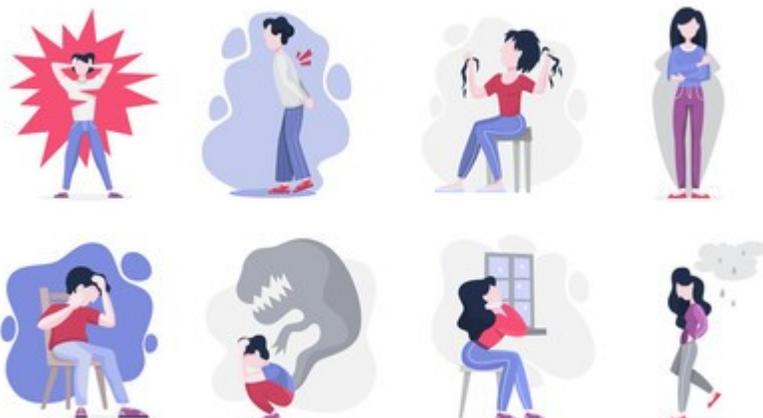
30% of grades 7-8 students state they feel **nervous** or **worried** and under a lot of **stress** or **pressure**

Source: TDBS Student and Parent Census 2017

Signs of Negative Stress

Difficult or annoying behaviour is what we notice in youth because it is visible and often requires a response. But it is important to look beyond the behaviour and understand that many things may be happening inside the teen that are causing them to act that way.

Negative Stress May Look Like:



Negative Stress May Feel Like:

- Sick Stomach
- Sweaty Hands
- Butterflies
- Tired
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Poor Judgment
- Negative Thinking
- Loneliness
- Hard to Concentrate
- Feelings of Irritability, Sadness or Guilt
- Loss of Interest, Enjoyment or Energy

Supporting Your Teen with Stress and Anxiety

It Starts With You

Parents and caregivers need to be able to regulate their own emotions and role model their overall wellbeing so youth adopt these behaviours. Overall wellbeing includes physical, social, emotional and spiritual components.

Back to the Basics

The best way to manage negative stress is to be conscious of making good decisions about how you spend your time. Keep **SELF** in mind:

Sleep—Ages 5 to 13 need 9 to 11 hours of sleep each night and 14 to 17 need 8 to 10 hours.

Exercise— Youth should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Leisure — Make time to do something fun! This is important for social, emotional and spiritual components of wellbeing.

Food— Healthy eating has both short-term and long-term benefits. In the short term, it will give your teen more energy which can help in performance in school, sports, etc. In the long-term, eating healthy can help reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.

HOW TO REDUCE STRESS AND ANXIETY



What is Anxiety

Throughout our lives, we all experience various events that cause us stress, and that is normal. Although people sometimes use the word 'stress' and 'anxiety' interchangeably, these feelings are different. Stress is our response to daily pressures and to real or perceived threats. Anxiety is our reaction to the stress.

An anxiety-producing situation leads to uncomfortable symptoms such as worry, fear, a racing heart, sweating, or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

A counter-productive way youth may try to cope with situations that evoke these uncomfortable feelings are to **avoid** them.



Did You Know:

Anxiety is based in fear and fear can cloud judgement.

Avoidance

Uncomfortable symptoms may be controlled by avoiding the anxiety producing situation.

Examples of avoidance may include:

- skipping class
- using drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- procrastination around challenging tasks



Avoidance is a cycle. Avoidance may result in short-term relief from anxiety.

Short-Term Relief From Anxiety

Avoidance of the anxiety-producing situation might give an immediate sense of relief. The symptoms of anxiety might lessen but only **temporarily**.



But the relief from anxiety is only temporary.

Long-Term Anxiety Growth

The fear that initially led to avoidance **worsens** and the brain learns that when the anxiety producing situation is avoided, the symptoms go away. As a result, the symptoms of anxiety will be **worse** the next time and avoidance is more likely leading to a negative cycle that does not address the cause of anxiety.



The symptoms of anxiety get worse with avoidance which may then lead to more avoidance and the cycle will continue.



Mindfulness

It is important to be aware of signs of stress and anxiety, both for yourself and your youth. Mindfulness and relaxation exercises can help increase awareness of and accepting oneself which supports overall wellbeing.

Journaling—write down what you are grateful for, your worries, fears, etc.

Body Scan—can be used for youth or adults. Try practicing this at any time of the day.

https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/workfiles/BodyScanMeditation_Transcript.pdf

<https://youth.anxietycanada.com/mindfulness-exercises>

Three Senses Mindfulness—a great way to connect with what you are feeling right now.

<https://youth.anxietycanada.com/mindfulness-exercises>

Mindful Breathing—this is a great way to focus attention.

<https://youth.anxietycanada.com/mindfulness-exercises>

Practice When Calm...

Strategies need to be practiced regularly to be effective. They will not help when introduced for the first time in the midst of a meltdown.



Fill Your Toolkit

Talk About What's Going On

Create a **safe space** for your youth to talk. If you are asking a question you must be prepared to listen without being defensive or reactive. This creates space in the relationship for your youth to reach out to speak to you whether they want solutions or just a person to confide in.

Invite Conversation

Be prepared to **invite** your youth to talk a few times before they might be ready to engage.

Use **exploratory questions** such as “I have noticed...”. An example can be “I have noticed you seem upset when you get home from school. It makes me think something might be happening and I want to help you feel better. When you are ready to talk about it I will be here”.

Name Feelings

Feelings are normal and naming feelings normalize them even more. Example can be “It sounds like you are feeling really sad because...”.

Problem Solve Together

Remember, try to **avoid avoidance**.

Problem solving together does not mean you need to provide the answers, it is working through a problem together. To give it a try, follow the steps below and remember to **let your youth lead**:

1. Identify the Problem
2. Brainstorm Possible Solutions
3. Choose a Solution
4. Do It
5. Evaluate
6. Go Back to Brainstorming if the Solution Did not Work



Did you know...

Good decision making is a life skill that helps teens to cope with stress. Talking to them about their decision-making can be really informative. Intentional problem-solving steps will support your teen in the future when faced with a difficult situation.

What Does Your Self Care Plan Look Like?

Consider 5 things you can do in your busy life that support your overall wellbeing (physical, social, emotional and spiritual).

Physical e.g. walking, stretching, jogging, yoga

Social e.g. set time aside to engage in social activities with ones you care for

Emotional e.g. acceptance of self, acknowledging needs, practice self-compassion

Spiritual e.g. set time aside for yourself, mindful breathing, meditation, time in nature

Further Resources on Stress and Anxiety

Psycom—Information for parents on strategies to help anxious children.

<https://www.psycom.net/help-kids-with-anxiety>

Anxiety Canada—Information for parents and youth on anxiety with strategies to help with anxiety.

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/parenting/abcs-anxiety>

<https://youth.anxietycanada.com/anxiety-101>

Kids Health—Information for parents and youth by topic—Includes information on teenage brain wellness.

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress.html>

American Psychological Association—Information on identifying signs of stress in youth.

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-children>

Healthy Children.org—Information for parents based on age groups.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Helping-Children-Handle-Stress.aspx>

Stressed Teens—Information for parents and youth.

<https://www.stressedteens.com/resources-for-parents>

The Teenage Brain



Starting around the age 9 to 10 the brain has a growth spurt that lasts into the mid-20's. This is one of the contributors, along with hormonal changes, to why adolescence can be a challenging time for both the youth going through it as well as their parent/caregivers.

It is a time of change and growth. During these years, parents and caregivers may be faced with the change from their youth being more dependant, helpless and agreeable to a spirited adolescent who may talk back, storm out and roll their eyes as they begin developing their own identity and wanting autonomy.



It is important for parents/caregivers to remember that although teens need to develop their autonomy and are often turning away from parents and turning more to peers for connection, they still need their parents'/caregivers' guidance and involvement that is sensitive and empathetic to what they are experiencing.

The teen brain is in a constant state of development. Some areas of the brain mature faster than others. For example, the areas of the brain associated with reward, motivation and impulsivity matures first, then the prefrontal cortex matures later (the prefrontal cortex is responsible for logic, reasoning, weighing the pros and cons, setting goals and controlling feelings).

How to Provide Support your Teens Development...

Teens need your help to think through the outcomes of their decisions. This is because the part of the brain that helps teens assess risk and control impulses is still growing and developing; therefore, they may not think through all the consequences of their actions. Teens also need practice in making decisions, you can help with this by:

Let your teen decide what, when, and how to do things (unless it is a risk to their safety or wellbeing).

Work together to set rules and agree on curfews. Also work with your teen to set time limits for computer, tv, phones, video games and other electronic devices. Together decide what will happen if your teen breaks the rules. Remember to listen to what they want and express your wants as well.

Help your teen take positive risks like trying a new sport, new skill, making new friends, and going new places. Along with decision making this will build confidence and self-control.

Did You Know:



The brain follows the simple principle of use it or lose it; the brain connections that teens use again and again become stronger and the connections they do not use fade away. How teens spend their time matters and what they do will help shape their brains.

Help your teen learn how to manage time and tasks. You can teach your teen to make lists of things to do and help them use their calendar to keep up with responsibilities.

Help your teen be physically active. Sports, exercise and being outdoors are good for the brain.

Sleep is extremely important for teens and they should aim for 9 hours of sleep each night. Adequate sleep helps to build a stronger and more alert to learning experiences brain, lower stress, increase memory and elevates moods which all impacts their academics.

Talk with your teen. Teens often have mood swings and act on how they feel before they can think it through; this is due to changes happening in their brain which slows their ability to identify emotions. They often struggle to understand their own feelings as well as the feelings of others. You can help with this!



- Say clearly how YOU feel. For example, “I was worried because you didn’t call to check in”. Try not to generalize or blame; for example “you never do what I ask you to because you don’t care”. Refrain from comparing to others.
- Ask your teen how they are feeling. If you are inviting this conversation, be prepared to discuss whatever is brought up.
- If your teen is angry or upset try to model a positive strategy for regulating intense emotion.

Further Resources on the Teenage Brain

Psychology Today— Article on teenage development as parent/teen relationship

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/compassion-matters/201402/what-the-teenage-brain-can-teach-us-about-ourselves?collection=154360>

Teenmentalhealth.Org—Understanding the Teenage Brain

<http://teenmentalhealth.org/learn/the-teen-brain-2/>

MyHealth.Alberta.ca—Adolescent Growth and Development

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=te7233>

Mental Health

Teens who are mentally healthy are more likely to see transitioning to junior high in a positive light. They are resilient, connected to healthy support systems and use healthy coping skills.

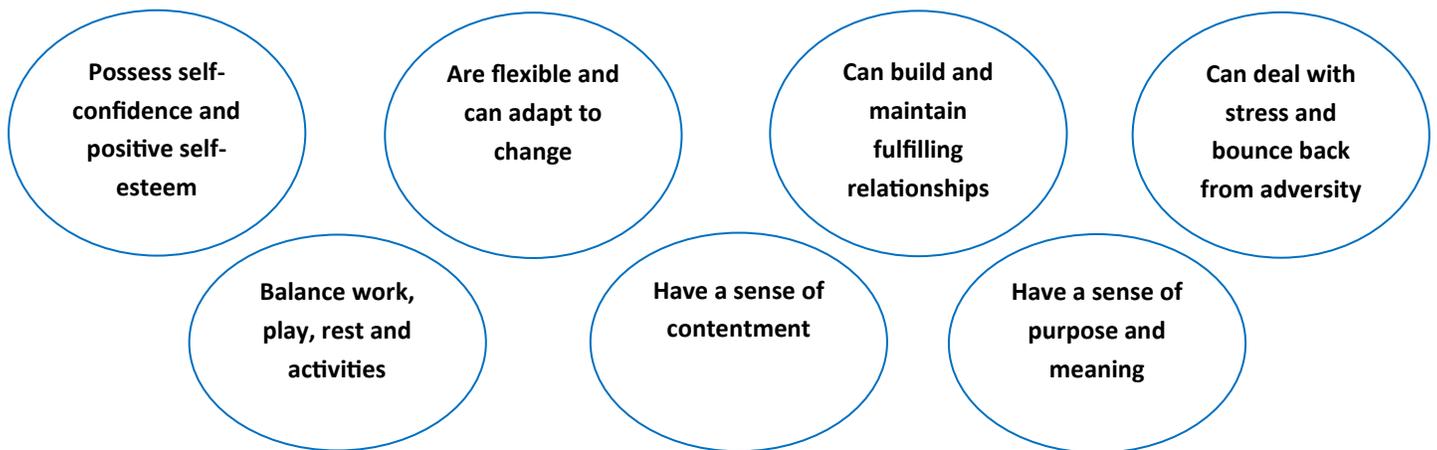
Discussing mental wellness with your teen is important, and gathering evidence based, accurate information is critical. You will find reliable resources throughout this handout and at the end of this section. Having conversations and highlighting the importance of mental health and wellness helps teens learn skills needed to support their mental wellbeing, physical health, success in school and reduce stigma.



 Positive relationships and connections are key to building resiliency, as it equips us with the ability to cope and recover from mental health challenges.

What is Mental Health...

We **all** have mental health. Mental health is **not simply the absence of mental illness**. Some examples of someone who possesses positive mental health includes:



Mental Health vs. Mental Illness...

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, mental health and mental illness are not the same thing. Mental illness:

- is a recognized, medically diagnosable illness
- affects how a person thinks, behaves and interacts with others
- results from a variety of factors (biological, developmental and/or psychosocial)
- can be managed in similar ways to treating physical disease (e.g., prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation)

Mental Health Stigma...

Fear and misunderstanding often lead to prejudice against people with mental illness. It is one of the main reasons why people don't consider mental illness a real health issue.

Stigma may prevent those who are experiencing mental health challenges from reaching out for support, **especially in youth**.

Be a role model when it comes to mental health. Openly talking about mental health and feelings with your teen helps to normalize the issue and break down stigma. Open discussion can encourage others to speak about their own emotions and mental health struggles.



Through compassion and acceptance, we can reduce the stigma around mental health

Further Resources on Mental Health

Mind Your Mind—Information about mental health and illness. Interactive games for stress relief and learning.

<https://mindyourmind.ca/>

CAMH—Information on addressing and challenging stigma surrounding mental illness.

<https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/addressing-stigma>

Kids Health—Information for parents and youth by topic.

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress.html>

Reach Out—Information and resources on mental health and well-being.

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

Kids Help Phone—Open 24/7, 365 days a year. Psychologists offering support for children and young adults.

1-800-668-6868 kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/

Stressed Teens—Information on various topics for parents and youth.

<https://www.stressedteens.com/resources-for-parents>

Bullying

Youth Concerns...

- What happens if I get bullied, what would I do?
- What happens if my friends are being bullied, what could I do?
- What if I get bullied and other people then start to bully me too?
- What if people spread lies about me?



1 in 3 youth are bullied

Source: Statistics Canada, 2012

What Can I Say to My Youth About Bullying...

Explain the difference between someone doing something that is Rude vs. Mean vs. Bullying

- **Rude** is when something is **unintentional** and happens **once**
- **Mean** is when something is **intentionally** harmful and happens **once**
- **Bullying** is when something is **intentionally** harmful and happens **repeatedly**

Encourage youth to speak up and stand up to bullying. Encouraging your youth to become an “**upstander**” (someone who stands up to a bully instead of remaining silent) instead of a bystander is a major way bullying can be stopped. This can be hard for youth to do and further resources for parents and youth can be found at the end of this section to help.



Did You Know:

In 90% of bullying incidents, peers are present and watching. Bullying often stops within 10 seconds when bystanders intervene.

Source: PREVNet

Online Bullying...

Discuss cyberbullying with your teen and what they can do if they witness or experience this. Cyberbullying affects victims in different ways than traditional bullying. It can follow a victim everywhere 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from school, to the mall and all the way into the comfort of their home .

Also discuss with your teen what they are saying and doing online. The acronym THINK can be helpful with this. Discussing social media from a positive perspective can have a great impact.

Thoughtful Helpful Inspiring Necessary Kind

Practical Suggestions...

- Keep track of the bullying (write it down and/or save a screenshot)
- Letting the person bullying know that their actions are not okay
- Do not respond to nasty or aggressive messages
- Do not ignore nasty or aggressive messages; report it to an adult who can help
- If the target is another youth, let that person know they are supported and cared about
- Talk to a trusted adult and/or police when physical threats or a crime is involved



Further Resources on Bullying

RCMP—Statistics on bullying, what to do for parents and youth, information about bullying and the law.

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/bull-inti/index-eng.htm>

PREVNet—Information for youth and adults including signs and behaviours of experiencing bullying, types of bullying, strategies in stopping bullying, includes videos and links.

<https://www.prevnet.ca/>

Kids Health—Information for parents and youth by topic. Information on bullying includes helping kids deal with bullying, teaching kids not to bully, what to do if being bullied, what to do if being a bully etc.

<https://kidshealth.org/>

Reach Out—Sections for parents and youth on bullying including being a bystander, what to do if someone is being bullied, what bullying looks like, cyberbullying etc.

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

Need Help Now - Sections for parents and students on topics including bullying and cyberbullying.

<https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/>

Kids Help Phone—Open 24/7, 365 days a year. Psychologists offering support for children and young adults.
1-800-668-6868

kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/

Friendship & New Connections

Youth Concerns...

What if I can't make new friends?
All of my friends are in another class!
What if I don't fit in?
I'm scared of meeting new people!
What if I lose my elementary school friends?



Did you know...

Social anxiety affects people in different ways. Some will make themselves smaller and some will make themselves louder



Teens want to be close to others, and making friends is a big part of the teen years. Sometimes this is not easy for adolescents but there are ways you can support them to feel more able to do this.



Did You Know:

Research shows giving and receiving kindness can enhance a person's overall sense of self-worth, self-esteem, creativity, concentration and energy while strengthening the heart (physically and emotionally), as well as easing anxiety, reducing stress, lowering blood pressure and inflammation.

How can I Support my Teen in Making New Friends...

Brainstorm with your teen ways they can make new connections. For example:

- How can they find people with similar interests?
- What type of clubs does the school provide?
- What kinds of things can they talk about with new people to engage in conversation?

Help your teen improve conversational skills. **Curiosity** and **generosity** are key in becoming a good conversationalist. This looks like **inquiring** about other people's lives and interests and then giving them your undivided **attention**.

- Discuss some questions with your teen that they could ask when getting to know new people and **practice** it! Role playing, although awkward at times, can be a great way to practice to gain new skills in a safe setting.

How can I Support my Teen in Making New Friends Continued...

Explore what makes a good friend, what healthy boundaries look like, and what makes good healthy relationships.

Boost your teen’s self-confidence. Help your teen **identify** their own qualities that make them special.



Did You Know:

Everyone wants to feel safe, seen, understood and connected. Sometimes life is complicated and depending on what is happening in peoples’ lives, their mental health changes. Everyone has the ability to create a positive impact on others, ourselves and community.

Further Resources on Friendship and New Connections

Kids Health—Information for parents and youth by topic.

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/school-jobs/?WT.ac=t-nav-school-jobs>

Verywell Families—Talking to your teen about friendships.

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/talking-to-teens-about-friendship-2610992>

HealthyFamiliesBC—Teenage Friendships

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/teens-friendships>

Peer Pressure

Youth Concerns...

If I don't do what my peers say, I'm not going to have any friends.
I don't know how to say no.
Why shouldn't I try these new things everyone is talking about?



Conflict is a part of life and may not need to be a negative experience. It is important to remember that conflict can lead to positive change and new understandings.



How can I Support my Teen with Peer Pressure...

Communicate boundaries with your teen. Discussing what boundaries are, how boundaries can support healthy relationships, and what to do when someone challenges their boundaries.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-13176/6-steps-to-set-good-boundaries.html>

Scenarios can help practice decision making. Read a scenario, identify what decision or problem the scenario shows, brainstorm some options, discuss the pros and cons of those options and make an informed decision together.

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/AddictionsSubstanceAbuse/if-tch-grade-8-peer-influence.pdf> (AHS)

Learn to Negotiate. This is key to healthy relationships between you and your teen. This means clearly explaining your needs while listening to their needs as well.

Stick to the Present. Don't drag in past issues. Doing so will only muddy the conflict further.

Identify what makes up a healthy relationship and what makes up an unhealthy relationship; when looking at the make up of healthy and unhealthy relationships consider what does healthy and unhealthy relationship look like, sound like and feel like. For example, a healthy relationship may **look like** smiling lots, **sound like** laughing and complements and **feel** safe. An unhealthy relationship may **look like** angry faces, **sound like** shouting and put downs and **feel** scary. Another example is when you see two people exchange words but use closed body language (crossing arms, smirking etc), this is an example of what an unhealthy relationship may look like; explore these notions with your youth.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/lifetime-connections/201809/6-rules-healthy-friendships>

Opening Locks and Locker

Youth Concerns...

I'm going to look stupid if I can't open my locker.

I don't know who to ask if I need help.

People will make fun of me if I can't figure it out.

If I can't open my locker I am going to be late and won't have my books and will get in trouble.



Examine your own biases towards junior high and ensure that you are helping your child to see it in a positive light.

How can I Support my Youth...

Practice locks to increase your teen's understanding of how they work. You can introduce locks or show a Youtube video.

Challenge each other to a race to see who can open the lock the fastest. Interacting and teaching each other about opening locks can help reframe this concern as a fun challenge and empower them to feel more confident.

Brainstorm who your teen can ask for help from at their new school. This may include teachers, school staff, administration staff, school counsellor or other students.

Discuss anxiety. Anxiety is a normal part of life and all people feel anxious at times. Anxiety can be helpful when it keeps people motivated or warns them about danger but can become unhelpful when it starts interfering with daily life.



Allow your teen to discuss their worries about junior high and try not to minimize these worries although they may seem trivial and you may not understand them.



Getting Lost

Youth Concerns...

I'm going to be late!

I can't ask the older students, they will make fun of me.

The teachers will start class and I will walk in late and everyone will look and laugh at me.



Did You Know:

Anxious thoughts sometimes take over rational thoughts.

How can I Support my Youth...

Practice problem solving skills (see page 15 under Scenarios) and ask someone for help. Brainstorm who they can ask for help.

Challenge myths and assumptions. For example, many students believe that older students are not interested in helping them when in fact those older students understand what it is like to be in grade 7 and may be happy to help.

Discuss why your youth may not want to ask for help—they may feel silly, scared or embarrassed. Normalize these feelings and let them know that there are many people who are there to support them. Ask them if they were in elementary school, if a younger student asked them for help, what would they do? This helps to build **empathy** as well.



Contact the school to see if there is a copy of a map. You and your youth can use the map to plan routes to each of their classes together.

Visit the junior high they are attending as much as possible. This can include taking a tour before classes begin, going to theatre productions, orientations, information nights or sporting events. This will create familiarity and comfort with the new environment.

Increased Homework



Did you know...

Self-worth and self-esteem are sometimes tied to grades and school performance.



Youth Concerns...

If my homework goes up, I won't have time to hang out with friends.
Everyone says that junior high is going to be harder with much more homework!
I want to get good grades because I always get good grades.

How can I Support my Youth...

Breaking down tasks. Help your youth break down homework into bite-sized tasks and activities to relieve anxiety. Your teen can write down the tasks they are responsible to complete and the deadline. Then list all of the smaller steps they will need to complete the tasks.

Help them **commit** to certain times for school work as well as down time as a part of self-care and wellness.

Incorporate activities and tools to help students feel more organized.

Teach your teen ways to stay organized in a way that works for them. This can include how to use an organizer, notebook or device to write down assignments and tasks.

Discuss that homework consistently builds through the school year. It is not intended to be unmanageable and if your teen is struggling to keep up, it is important to connect with the teacher.



Did You Know:

For the most part, the teachers and schools are open for adjustments of school work. This is the same for retaking tests, assignment and projects. Open communication is key..

Further Resources on Increased Homework

Kids Health—Information for parents and youth by topic. Sections on homework.
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/school-jobs/?WT.ac=t-nav-school-jobs>

What Parents Might be Concerned About

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the value we place on ourselves and what we feel our self-worth to be. It is about more than just seeing our good qualities, it is also about being able to see and accept your strengths as well as weaknesses.

When our kids have a positive self-esteem they may be more able to recognize their strengths and be okay with their limitations, try new challenges, think for themselves and be able to deal with frustration and disappointment in a healthy way. This might be a concern to parents as self-esteem is an area which a lot of youth struggle, especially in adolescence. Self-esteem can be impacted by things like friendships, school, activities and pressures related to media and social media.



Further Resources on Self-Esteem

Child Development Institute—How to help children and teens develop healthy self-esteem
<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-psychology/self-esteem/#.XN8qpIJKiUk>

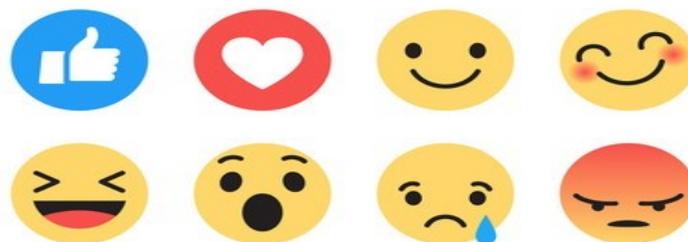
Mindful.org—Ways to help teens build a sense of self-worth
<https://www.mindful.org/five-ways-to-help-teens-build-a-sense-of-self-worth/>

Today's Parent—Tips on building self-esteem in children
<https://www.todaysparent.com/family/parenting/how-to-build-your-childs-self-esteem/>

Social Media and Gaming

If they haven't already, teenagers in this stage will likely socialize, play, and live within the cyber world. This can be within specific apps like Instagram or Snapchat, or it can be through video sites like YouTube.

Parents should be aware of your youth's screen time and of the media content they are consuming. At this stage young minds are very vulnerable to ideas and it is smart to inquire about what they are watching or reading. This is also a great time to create or reorganize a social media contract outlining guidelines for internet play and work. This can be a good conversation even if you think your youth doesn't spend a lot of time online.



What Parents Might be Concerned About

Video games are increasingly becoming more community and socially oriented. They are also socially acceptable and increasingly addictive. Just like social media, keep an eye on what kind of video games your youth are playing. They sometimes will play with groups of other people and may want to play late into the night. Gaming also has its own subculture, depending on the games they play, so it can be useful to know what they are. Social media and gaming are not strictly bad but it can have negative impacts to mental and physical health and parents should be familiar with all sides of social media and gaming.

Further Resources on Social Media and Gaming

Common Sense Media—entertainment and technology recommendations for families and schools
<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

Healthychildren.org—wide range of information regarding children and families. Section on media includes how to make a family media use plan.
<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/family-life/media/Pages/default.aspx>

Mediasmarts.ca— media literacy for parents and youth.



Conflict

You and your youth might face some growing pains in regards to your relationship as well. Below are some tips to help navigate conflicts with your youth.

- Try to think back to your feelings and experiences as a young person. This can help you **relate** to your child.
- Remember that a teenage brain and their development means your teen might not be able to see the risks and consequences of a situation or the **social benefits** may outweigh the risks or consequences. Your child might not be able to see things from your perspective either.
- Try to be **flexible** about little issues. This might mean your teen is more willing to listen and discuss bigger issues.
- Go easy on yourself and don't expect to be perfect—you're human too. If you overreact or lose your self-control a bit, apologize to your teen and discuss how you were feeling. This is also a great way for youth to **normalize** their emotions and learn to be able to name and identify what they are feeling.
- Avoid dealing with conflict when you and your teen are feeling upset or angry. Try to wait until you feel calm instead.
- Prepare what you are going to say and think about the words you want to use.
- Try to make sure that not every conversation with your child is about difficult issues. Spend some time **enjoying each other's company**.

WE LISTEN. WE SUPPORT.

WE CONNECT.

Solutions Navigation and Walk-In Counselling supports individuals and families of all ages. Our team assists individuals and families needs in a way that are action oriented and focused on finding solutions to real life challenges. Our team can assist in various ways including over the phone or in person.

These challenges may include, but are not limited to:

- Housing
- Finances
- Subsidies
- Parenting
- Relationships
- Forms and Applications

Our services are free. Please call or walk-in. To learn more about Solutions Navigation or Walk-In Counselling call 780-464-4044 or go to

<https://www.strathcona.ca/community-families/well-being-and-mental-health/navigation/>

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US:

Second floor, 501 Festival Avenue, Sherwood Park

Office hours: Monday · Friday

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Office hours: Tuesday - Thursday

8:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Phone number: 780-464-4044

Email: familyandcommunity@strathcona.ca

Website: <https://www.strathcona.ca/community-families/>

