

Tips to Promote Social-Emotional Health Among Teens



What Teens Can Do:

-  When feeling angry, worried or troubled, discuss your feelings with a parent, another trusted adult, or a trusted friend. Teachers and coaches are two examples of adults who can help.
-  Find safe and healthy interests that you enjoy outside of school and home.
-  Write down some goals for the future to help you stay focused on things that really matter. This can help you put day-to-day problems into perspective.
-  Avoid using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; these don't help with problems and often make things worse. Instead, think about positive ways to handle problems and the feelings that go along with them.
-  If you're in trouble with your mood, drug use, or sexuality, get help. You never need to feel alone.

What Parents Can Do:

-  Listen to your teenager - let them talk out their problems with you before jumping in with a solution. Teens need adults to believe in them unconditionally and expect them to succeed.
-  Encourage your teenager to get involved in activities that engage them with the community in a positive way. For some this may be sports or drama, for others it may involve tutoring younger kids or volunteering in the community.
-  Set clear expectations that you want to know where your teen is and when they'll be back. Discuss with them the consequences of the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
-  Help your teen to identify other adults to turn to when they want to talk.
-  Let your teenager know that it's okay to seek help from a counselor, health care professional, or trusted adult, if needed. Students and parents are encouraged to be aware of the services available at their school and how to access those services.
-  Encourage your teen to explore solutions. In many cases, they will know about the solutions - for example, extra help after school - but may need your encouragement to try them.
-  Everyone experiences anger and stress! Help your teen to find acceptable ways of working through these feelings.
-  Never let a moment of despair become true tragedy. If your child is depressed or moody, be certain that they cannot access firearms, prescription drugs, or other dangerous items in your home.

This tip sheet was adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)