

A close-up photograph of two young women lying on their stomachs in a grassy field, laughing joyfully. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a dark top. The woman on the right has blonde hair and is wearing a pink hoodie. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green field.

# tips for **Parents**

**Adolescents**

*Adjusting*  
**TO CHANGE**

*Getting to*  
**KNOW THEMSELVES**

*Is there something wrong?  
How to tell when your*  
**KIDS NEED HELP**

*How to* **TALK to your**  
**ADOLESCENTS**



Sharon had started spending  
***HOURS IN HER ROOM.***

## **TALKING** it through

Sharon told her mum she didn't want to go away with the family for the weekend. Instead she wanted to stay home and go with her boyfriend to a party. Anne, her mum, was a bit taken aback.

She thought Sharon was too young, at 15, to stay at home by herself for the weekend. She definitely didn't want to leave her alone with her boyfriend.

Sharon had started spending hours in her room. She was always talking on the phone or writing in her diary.

Sharon's younger brother, Richard, was really keen to go away. He didn't want Sharon to wreck his weekend. Anne felt angry that she was spending so much time on Sharon. She was worried she wasn't paying Richard enough attention.

She suggested that Sharon's friend Fiona go away with the family. Sharon said she just wanted to go to the party.

Sharon suggested she could stay at Fiona's place on the weekend instead. Anne talked to Fiona's mum, Pam, about this and about her fear of leaving Sharon unsupervised.

Pam understood exactly what Anne was saying.

Pam promised to take the girls to the party and to pick them up later. She also told Anne about an entertaining speaker who was talking at the school parents' evening. They both went along together. They laughed at the familiar situations the speaker talked about. The weekend worked out well with Sharon staying at Fiona's.

Pam talked Anne into joining a parents' group she was involved in. The group talked about the challenge of bringing up adolescents.



## Adolescents are **FINDING THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD**

They need a safe, caring space so:

- they can come to terms with their identity and adjust to their changing looks and new-found sexuality
- they can explore their own values
- they can learn how to negotiate and set themselves limits
- they can plan a future they are happy with.

**Try to find a balance between independence and family involvement**

# BE OPEN TO your

### Spend time together

- Find activities that you and your adolescent enjoy and make a regular time for them. Make time to eat together and talk about current issues.

### Adolescence is a time of experimentation, change and increasing independence.

- As young people become older and more independent, families change. Remember that other families are going through the same changes.

### Adolescents still need limits

- Talk to them about what they want to do and why you need to set limits. Let them know that you set limits because you care about them.

## TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH ADOLESCENTS

### Talk to your adolescents

- Talking to your adolescent is important. Remember to let them know you love them. Take an interest in what is happening in their lives.



# adolescent's ideas



## Be open to your adolescent's ideas

- Adolescents can be very idealistic. Try to remember when you were younger and idealistic. If you listen and try not to be judgmental, they are more likely to share their concerns with you.

## Sex and drugs

- It may be hard to talk to your son or daughter about sensitive topics like sex and drugs. Adolescents need information on these topics.
- Many adolescents will experiment with both sex and drugs. Try to talk about these topics with them. There are often stories in the newspaper or on TV about sex and drugs that you can use as a talking point.

## Let your adolescents know they can talk to you about their problems

- Try to just listen without reacting. There are times when you may be concerned about behaviour or problems. Try to be supportive and assist them to find solutions.

## YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO, TOO

### Parents need support

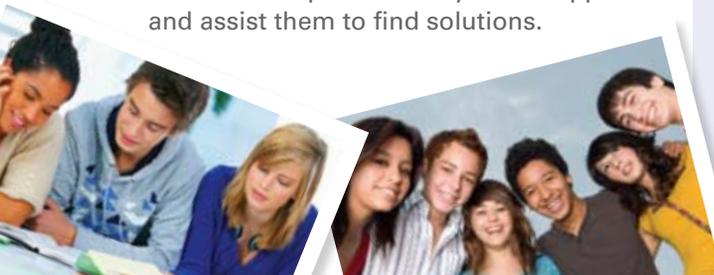
- Talk to other parents.
- Talk to your partner or other family and friends. Feeling supported yourself will help you cope with change.

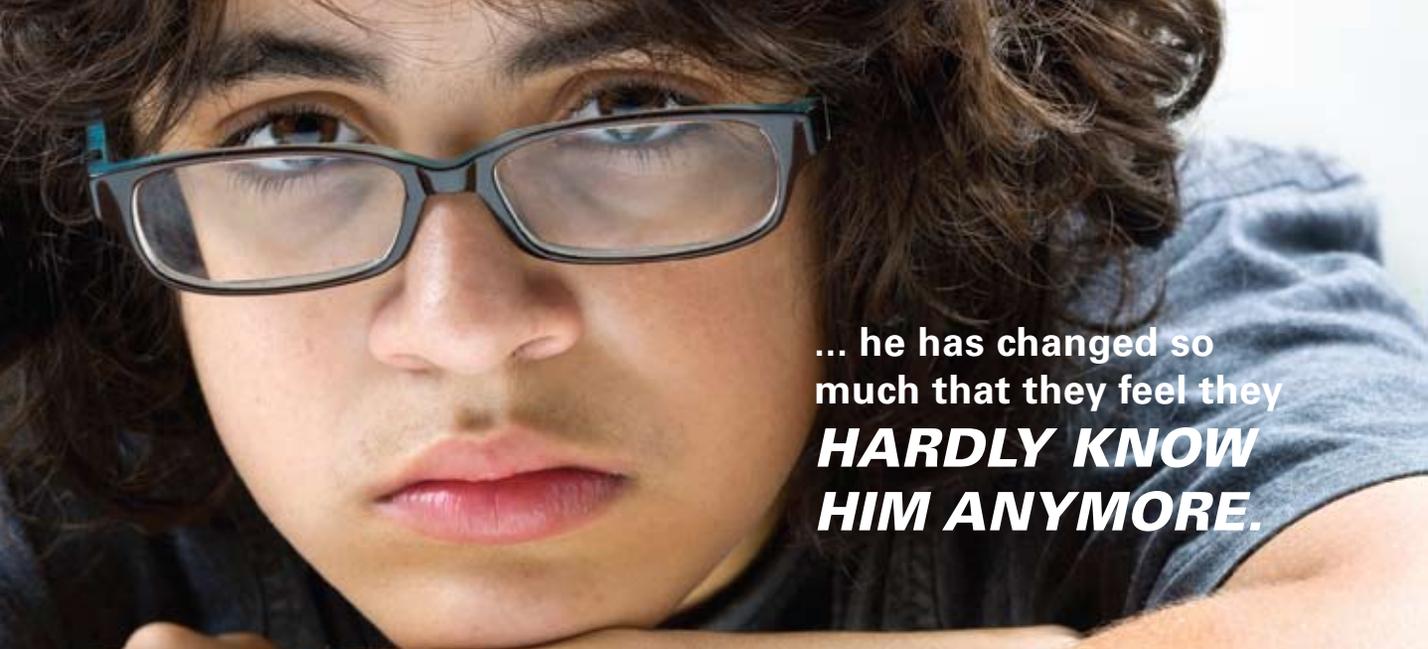
### Parent groups

- There may be parenting groups in your area that meet and talk about adolescents. Contact your local area health service or school to find out.

### If you are unsure about something, seek advice

- If talking to friends and family does not help or reassure you, talk to your child's teacher or a health professional you trust.
- You may have to look around to find the right person to talk to. Don't give up, keep trying. It may take time to find the right person who can assist you and your family.





... he has changed so much that they feel they ***HARDLY KNOW HIM ANYMORE.***

## If something is ***WRONG...***

- ➔ Many adolescents have emotional ups and downs.
- ➔ Some adolescents suffer from depression or anxiety.
- ➔ Depression lasting two weeks or more may be serious.
- ➔ Seek help early. Effective treatments include counselling.

All the kids are out riding their bikes, except Shane. He is moping around in his room again.

Derrick and Susan, his parents, are getting worried about him. He is skipping school and they are sure he is smoking dope. In fact he has changed so much that they feel they

hardly know him anymore. That night, Derrick helps Shane clean up after dinner. Derrick gets Shane talking about school. Shane says he hates it and doesn't want to go anymore.

Derrick tells him they are worried about him skipping school. He asks if Shane wants to talk to him about anything but Shane doesn't say much. Derrick tells Shane he seems really down. Shane agrees and says he has lost interest in everything. Derrick lets Shane know that if he wants to he can talk to someone outside the family.

Shane says this would be good. Derrick helps Shane make an appointment with a counsellor at the local community health centre. Shane is glad he has found someone to talk to about how he is feeling.

# Signs that an **ADOLESCENT** **NEEDS HELP**

If an adolescent's behaviour suddenly changes it is important that you seek advice, particularly if they show some of the following signs.

- Their school work gets worse suddenly.
- They start to use drugs and alcohol and this becomes a problem.
- They stop coping with problems and day to day activities.
- They begin to have trouble eating or sleeping.
- They complain of lots of physical problems.
- They become aggressive and start getting into trouble, like skipping school, stealing or vandalism.
- They become worried about their weight without actually being overweight.
- They become depressed and are negative for a length of time.

Talk to your adolescent's teacher. You can approach the school counsellor or your local health service for advice.



## Get the set!



You can also get brochures dealing with:

• **Babies** • **Kids 1-4** • **Kids 5-11** • **Parents**

To order your copies from the Commonwealth

Department of Health and Ageing:

Fax 1800 634 400 to order now, or phone 1800 066 247

## Useful numbers

Parent help lines in the following States and Territories:

NSW 1300 1300 52

VIC 13 22 89

SA 1300 364 100

QLD 1300 301 300

NT 1300 301 300

TAS 1300 808 178

ACT 02 6287 3833

WA 1800 654 432

LifeLine 13 11 14

**Kids Helpline**

1800 55 1800

**headspace**

Australia's National

Youth Mental Health

Foundation

[http://www.](http://www.headspace.org.au)

[headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

You can also contact Maternal and Child Health services, social workers, community health centres or your GP. Check the White Pages for phone numbers.

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