

SESSION 6 Leaflet for parents **Let's play! Between the ages of 11–18**

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This leaflet includes ideas for activities that older children and teenagers might enjoy. Some of these activities you may enjoy doing together. At other times older children or teenagers may prefer to play alone or with friends.

The teenage years are a time of great change for young people. Their brain development and emotions are in chaos as they move from childhood to becoming an adult. Play is still very important for teenagers. Just as with young children play helps them to learn new skills, work through their feelings and practise life skills such as sharing, turn taking, coping with failure and experiencing the joy of success.

Teenagers' play can at times seem very confusing. One minute they are playing like young children and the next they are trying out high-risk adult activities. This is all part of their normal development as they struggle from being a dependent child to coping with the demands of being an independent adult.

You still have an important part in helping your teenager to get the most out of play while learning.

Encourage your teenager to take control or ownership of their own activities as this helps to build their self esteem, supports their decision making and also minimises the risk of them becoming bored.

They will now be becoming increasingly independent, learning to develop as an individual. Often they are reluctant to ask for help especially in front of their friends, but it is important to let them know you are still around if needed. You may often witness their changeable behaviour swinging from mature to immature behaviour.

Teenagers become more self-conscious and often find it harder to play in mixed sex groups. Older boys may feel they can no longer take part in many creative activities whilst older girls may tend to play less physical games. To help avoid gender stereotypes try and make activities fun, encourage mixed teams whilst celebrating these differences.



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Friendships are now very important and approval of their peer group is often seen as essential. Growing independence in teenage years may also allow potential for negative peer pressure, such as the influence of smoking, alcohol and early sexual intercourse so continuing parental guidance and support is essential.

Try to set aside regular time to spend with your teenager, maybe sharing and enjoying an activity together. This will help them to feel valued as individuals and also provide a chance to listen to any concerns they may have.

Find an opportunity to chat about their individual interests. A simple discussion about music allows them to talk to you about their own taste in music, which may well differ considerably from your own. Acknowledge that all of us have different musical preferences and hobbies, but that it is important to respect and accept differences.

If trips or activities with friends away from home or school, are being planned, it is important to lay down clear ground rules, which should be agreed by both teenagers and parents.

Parents should try to explain what they view as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, ensuring a consistent message is given. At this stage good communication is essential in developing a trusting relationship.

Parents often have to weigh up risk but many of these opportunities allow teenagers to explore their own independence and confidence. Taking risks is a normal part of a teenager's development. Their brains respond to the excitement of trying out risky activities, especially when they are being watched by friends. It's all part of becoming an adult, just without the adult brain to tell them when to stop!

As their brain matures they will learn how to measure risk in a safer way and many older teenagers have often already developed a great sense of responsibility. But in the meantime they will need you to be sensitive in difficult times, by giving them firm guidance not ultimatums and being there to support them when they get it wrong. Play can be a way for you and your teenager to still communicate even if you don't always understand them.

Teenagers are becoming a much more technologically knowledgeable generation, enjoying a vast range of computer games, social network sites



and communications by mobile phone. It is important you openly talk to your teenager about online safety. Discuss cyber bullying, the use of privacy settings on social networking sites, especially the dangers that are involved in sharing all personal details and photographs widely.

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Agree boundaries or house rules for the use of the Internet in your own home.

Over recent years it has been reported that there has been a steady decline in physical activity in teenagers and a rise in teenage obesity. Attempt to entice your teenager away from the computer and TV to start to be involved in and enjoy a time of physical activity each week. Consider agreeing a time limit on how much computer and TV viewing is allowed each day.

Play Tips

Between the ages of 11–18 years

- ✓ Sporting activities with friends or as part of an organised team: football, rugby, netball, basketball
- ✓ Swimming
- ✓ Interest in fashion
- ✓ Learning a musical instrument
- ✓ Cinema or bowling
- ✓ Computer and video games
- ✓ Organised activities: scouts, guides, school activity clubs
- ✓ Board games
- ✓ Creative writing
- ✓ Socialising: spending time with friends



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Play Tips

Between the ages of 11–18 years continued

- ✓ Visiting online social network sites
- ✓ Ice skating
- ✓ Dancing
- ✓ Watching TV and favourite videos
- ✓ Reading for fun not just for studies
- ✓ Cooking – opportunity to experience new foods
- ✓ Creative interests – sewing, painting
- ✓ Trying out range of new activities and hobbies: archery, golf, fishing, skateboarding, rock climbing
- ✓ Listening to music
- ✓ Making own music/forming a band

