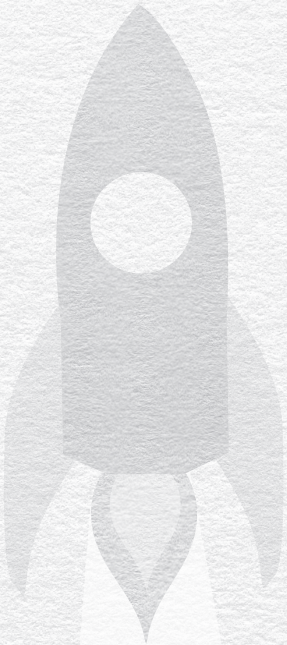
SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN THE TEENAGE YEARS

By Dr Sue Roffey



Try this:

START co-regulation early - by 10 at the latest involve children in decision making - asking good questions and taking their ideas seriously.

THINK of the process as letting go of apron strings - each time your teenager reassures you by their actions they can take responsibility give them more rope next time. Talk openly about this.

DO encourage negotiation of ground rules for living together - ask what is fair for everyone.

DO give choices – e.g. "looks like there are three options here - have you got any more to suggest. What do you think is the best one?"

DO show teenagers how to negotiate and at times compromise - it's a life skill!

DO be consistent and reliable - never promise or threaten anything you are unable or unwilling to deliver - so take care what you say.

DO decide what your priorities are and what you are going to ignore.

GIVE information rather than condemnation – use "I" statements.

DO provide indirect opportunities to listen.

DO respect privacy.

origin foundation

DO welcome their friends and show interest in them.

DO model respect and self-respect.

DO reassure your teenager of their strengths and that they are lovable.

DO let them know that they are accepted for who they are even if you disapprove of their behaviour.

DO let go of the need to be in control.

DO discuss issues of trust and re-assurance – they are complex.

DO remember that conflict is normal – it's how it's managed that matters.

DO be affectionate and light-hearted where possible.

DO teach problem-solving skills – sometimes it helps for these to be in the third person or hypothetical.

DO fit your expectations to your teenager, not the other way round.

DO accept that we all make mistakes. Don't make it impossible for your teenager to confess they got something wrong.

DO be aware of the models you provide - children see, children do, children hear, children say.

And avoid this:

DON'T nag - it doesn't work and is exhausting.

DON'T pry - teenagers resent this.

DON'T interrogate - especially in situations where the teenager might feel trapped.

DON'T make comparisons.

DON'T be judgemental - especially of their friends.

DON'T be a doormat.

DON'T try to be your teenager's best friend.

DON'T take things personally (try anyway!).

And finally...

DO remember it's a phase (albeit a rather long one!).

DO remember that your initial relationship is likely to re-establish itself in a more adult form.

DO find out where your own support lies.

DO look after your own wellbeing and plan for your own future.

DO forgive yourself for not always getting it right.



Most teenagers come through this difficult phase but mental health issues are on the rise so do be vigilant for escalating any worrying changes in behaviour. Seek out support for both you and your child.

Useful links:

sueroffey.com
raisingchildren.net.au
headspace.org.au

origin foundation

originfoundation.com.au