

Understanding adolescence

Adolescence is a critical stage of development that occurs between childhood and early adulthood, usually between the ages of 10 to 24 years old. During this time, young people undergo significant physical, cognitive and emotional changes as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a unique and challenging period as young people explore their identity, establish relationships, and begin to form their own values and beliefs. It can be a time of great excitement and growth, but also a time of confusion, stress, and uncertainty. Understanding what adolescence is and what it means can help parents and caregivers provide support, guidance and encouragement to their children during this important stage of life.

Empower confidence.
Start the conversation using these strategies:

- 1. Physical development**
Adolescents undergo significant physical changes, including growth spurts, hormonal changes and the onset of puberty. These changes have a big impact on their mood, self-esteem and confidence.
- 2. Cognitive development**
Adolescents are developing their critical thinking skills, abstract reasoning and problem-solving abilities. This is a time when they start to question authority and seek independence.
- 3. Emotional changes**
Adolescents can experience a wide range of emotions, including mood swings, stress, and anxiety. They may also struggle with self-esteem and body image issues.
- 4. Identity development**
Adolescents are exploring their identity and trying to figure out who they are and who they want to be. This process can involve experimenting with different attitudes, values and behaviours.
- 5. Relationships**
Adolescents are forming and maintaining relationships with their peers, family members and romantic partners. They need support and guidance in developing healthy relationships.
- 6. Risk-taking behaviour**
Adolescents may engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as experimenting with drugs or alcohol, engaging in unprotected sex or taking unnecessary physical risks.
- 7. Technology**
Adolescents are growing up in a digital world and spending more time online. Parents need to understand the impact of technology and how to set appropriate boundaries.
- 8. Academic pressure**
Adolescents may be facing increased academic pressure, such as high school exams and the demands of post-secondary education.
- 9. Family dynamics**
These can change during adolescence, as children become more independent and may start to challenge their parents. Be aware of these changes but continue to maintain a positive relationship.
- 10. Support and communication**
Adolescents need support and guidance, but they also need to be heard and understood. Effective communication, active listening and keeping an open mind are key to helping parents navigate this stage in their child's life. They can talk to you at any time without judgement.