

Dads and teenagers

Dads really do matter to teenagers, because good relationships between dads and kids can boost teenage self-esteem and wellbeing. Just being around and spending everyday time with your child is a great start.

Dads matter

Mums and dads play different roles and bring their own strengths.

Good relationships between dads and teenagers are about dad being around and being involved. These kinds of relationships can **boost teenagers' self-esteem**. For example, some research shows that teenage girls whose dads are warm and supportive report higher levels of self-esteem than peers.

Loving and attentive fathering has also been linked with fewer symptoms of depression in teenagers. Research shows that dads being involved can **help teenage boys stay out of trouble** too.

Children, especially boys, learn a lot from their dads about being in relationships. For example, the ways dads interact with their partners and children tends to influence how their children act in relationships later in their lives.

The bad news is that harsh fathering (when dads give less support and have more fights with kids) has been associated with more symptoms of depression in teenagers. Depression in dads themselves is also linked to psychological problems in teenagers, possibly particularly for girls.

How relationships change

Both mums and dads spend less time with their children during adolescence as teenagers gain more independence. But changes in father-teenager relationships can **open doors to new ways of connecting**.

Dads can find new ways to bond with their children in the teenage years. For example, you might find yourselves sharing leisure activities that you both enjoy, such as watching movies, sport or getting out for some exercise. Teenagers might also turn to their dads for help in areas such as deciding on careers, getting a drivers licence or managing money.

So **dad's role is still important** – as much as in your child's younger years.



Family relationships change as your child moves into the teenage years – you'll have to make room for [your child's friendships](#) and [romantic interests](#). But both mums and dads give teenagers the love and stability they need when lots of other things are changing. Your children also trust you for advice on things like education and careers.



did you know ?

Changes in family roles and structures over recent decades have made mums' and dads' roles more diverse than ever before. Trends in marriage, divorce and the number of women who work outside the home have all changed family relationships.

Building a strong relationship with your child

Even though your role has changed, you're still important to your child's health and wellbeing. You've got a big part to play in guiding your child's path to adulthood.

Here are some ways to stay involved in your child's life:

- **Just be there.** Research shows that when parents are around, adolescent children are likely to have fewer behaviour problems. You don't have to be in your child's face all the time – it might just be that you're in the house when she's in her bedroom. Your child will benefit just from knowing that

you're there if she needs you.

- **Try to relax sometimes on rules.** Trying to work out what you can give way on will help you cut back on fights with your child. If you do have a fight, see if you can work out something positive that will help you both feel better about it.
- **Negotiate and compromise.** Using negotiation skills and compromising when possible will help you have a positive relationship with your child. This is also a good way of modelling more grown-up ways of communicating.
- **Spend time with your child.** It won't be long before your child is all grown up, so take whatever chances you can to hang out. For ideas about how to spend time together, you might like to try some of the ideas in our article on [staying connected with your child](#).
- **Tell your child stories.** Children are never too old for a story. It can be about famous explorers, your own travel stories, tales of your life before you met your partner, great moments in sport, or anything else that'll catch your child's interest.
- **Show your child how much you love him.** Teenagers are never too old for a hug, even if they roll their eyes and say, 'You're so embarrassing, Dad!' If physical affection isn't your thing, there are other ways you can show love. Doing everyday things for your child is one – for example, turning up to sport every weekend, or picking him up from parties.
- **Be active.** Go for a bike ride, play basketball or even just walk to the shops together. If your child isn't so much into sport, try a board game or the quiz in the Saturday paper.
- **Share a hobby.** It can be easy to think teenagers are more interested in social media or computer games than hobbies. You might need to try a few different things before you find something you both like, but a shared hobby – such as cooking, yoga or fixing bikes – can be a great way to have fun and build your relationship.
- **Let your child be the expert.** Get your child to show you how to do something that you know less about than she does, even if it's the latest computer game. This is a great way for teenagers to build confidence and mentoring skills.



You might like to check out our [Talking to Teens interactive guide](#). It shows how different approaches to communicating with teenagers can get different results.



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