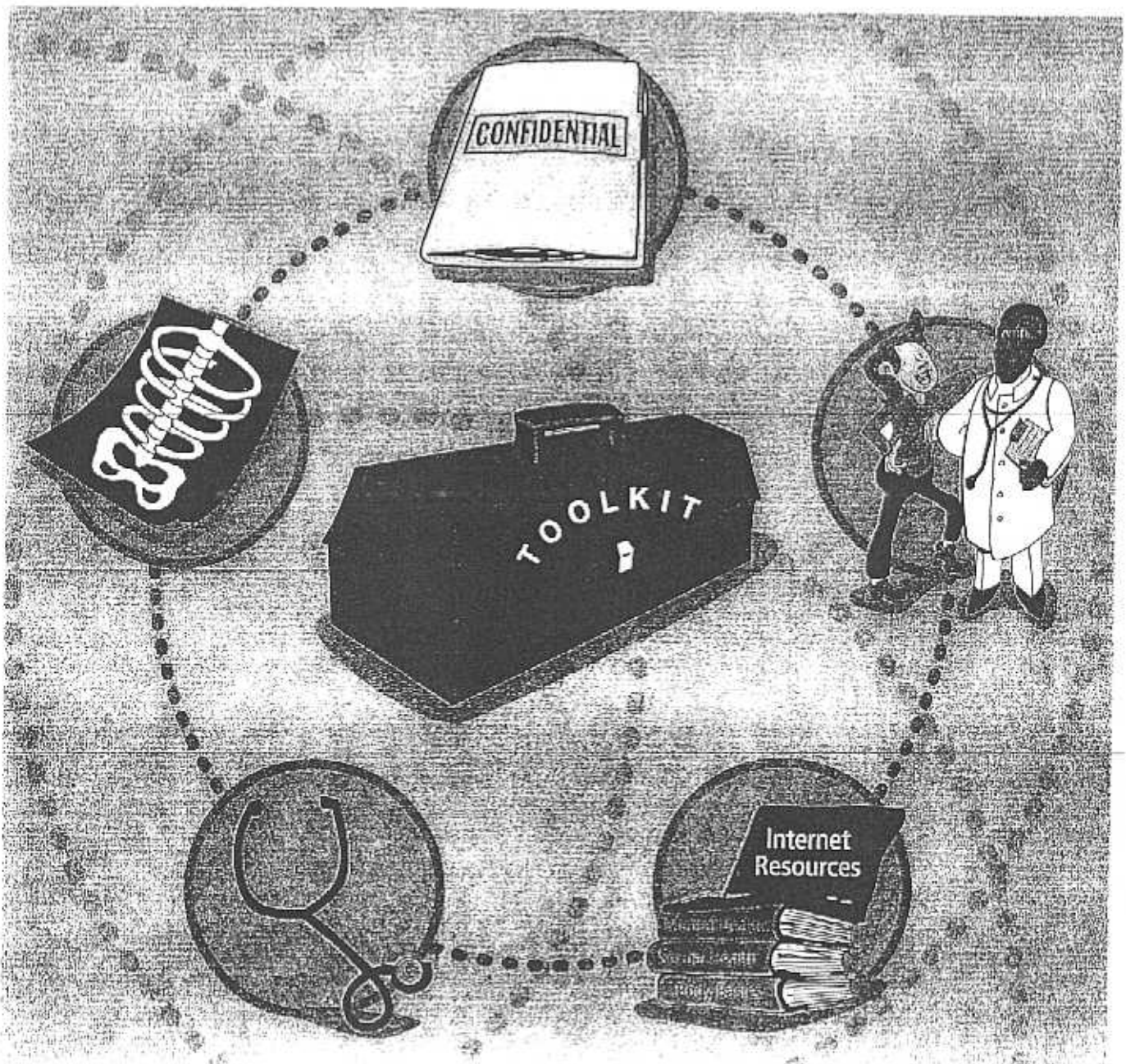




BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

An Adolescent Provider Toolkit

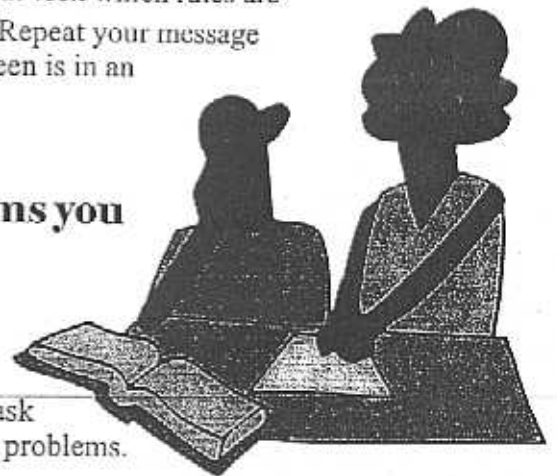


FOR PARENTS and ADULT CAREGIVERS

Know Myself, Know My Teen

Sometimes your opinions and personal experiences can stand in the way of listening with an open mind. If teens feel judged by their parents or guardians, they are less likely to share information that may be sensitive, embarrassing, or hard to talk about. Ask yourself these questions before you talk about sensitive and tough issues with your teen.

- 1 How do you feel?** Think through your opinions on subjects you will talk about with your teen. What are the memories and personal experiences that may shape your opinions and reactions? Keep in mind that your experiences may be different from your teen's experiences.
- 2 What was I doing when I was 16?** Have you thought about what you want to share with your teenager? Keep in mind where your teen is in his or her development. Hold off on sharing sensitive information with your teen until he/she is in the middle teen years or mature enough to handle the information.
- 3 Are you listening to your teen?** Spend as much time listening as you do talking. The key to good communication is hearing and understanding what your teen is saying and not making quick judgements.
- 4 Do you judge too quickly?** Always ask your teen what she or he is doing rather than assuming the worst. Pay attention to the way your teen makes decisions. Trust that he or she can make good decisions with accurate information. Remember to give information in a way that is easy to understand.
- 5 What are your rules about safety?** Tell your teen which rules are flexible and which rules must be followed for his or her safety. Repeat your message about the importance of safety. Seek help immediately if your teen is in an unsafe situation or is at risk of hurting him/herself or others.
- 6 Are you willing to get help for any problems you may have?**
It is important to be a role model for your teen. For example, if you are worried about your teen's substance use, it sends the wrong message if you or other household members are using drugs or alcohol. Seeing family members or other adults get or ask for help will encourage your teen to seek help for her or his own problems.



RESOURCES

- *Positive Parenting: Good Health for Parents* - a website for parents of teens. Available in English and Spanish.
- *Parenting: A Guide for Kids* - www.teen.com/articles/parents/parents.html. Articles in English and some in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Source:

1) Hubman B, Alford S. Are You an Askable Parent? Advocates for Youth. 2003. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/frtp/askable.pdf>

FOR PARENTS and ADULT CAREGIVERS

The 5 Basics of Parenting Adolescents

Adapted from "Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action"

1 LOVE AND CONNECT

Teens need a connection with their parents. Continue to support and accept your teen as she/he gets older and more mature.

Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Say good things about your teen when he or she does something well.
- ◆ Enjoy the good times you spend with your teen.
- ◆ Your teen will challenge your point of view. Discuss your ideas with your teen. It's OK to have a difference in opinion.
- ◆ Spend time just listening to what your teen is feeling, thinking, and experiencing.
- ◆ Treat each teen as a unique individual.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to build his or her interests, strengths, and talents.
- ◆ Provide meaningful roles for your teen in the family.
- ◆ Spend time together one-on-one and as a family.

Key Message for Parents:

Their world is changing. Make sure your love doesn't.

2 MONITOR AND OBSERVE

Teens need parents to know what is going on in their lives. Be aware of what they are doing in school and after school. Let them know you are aware of their activities. Find out what is going on by talking, not by constantly watching your teen.

Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Know where your teen is and what he or she is doing. Listen, observe, and talk with other adults who know your teen.
- ◆ Keep in touch with the other adults in your teen's life. They will let you know how he or she is doing when you are not there. Ask about the good and the bad.
- ◆ Involve yourself in school events.
- ◆ Stay on top of information about your teen's classes, grades, job, and interests.
- ◆ Learn and watch for warning signs of physical and mental health problems.
- ◆ Ask for advice if you notice any warning signs.
- ◆ Be aware of the relationships your teen has in and outside of the home.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to challenge him or herself.

Key Message for Parents:

Pay attention to your teen's activities. Your involvement matters.

3 GUIDE AND LIMIT

Teens need parents to set clear limits. These limits should protect your teen from unsafe situations and give him/her room to grow and mature.

Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Set two kinds of "house rules." The rules around safety cannot be argued. The rules around household tasks and schedules can be discussed.
- ◆ Set clear expectations that are high and also reasonable.
- ◆ Stand firm on the important issues such as safety and let go of the smaller issues.
- ◆ Help teens make better choices by teaching them, rather than punishing them.
- ◆ Enforce rules without hurting your teen's body or feelings.
- ◆ Give your teen more duties and more choices as they grow into adults.

Key Message for Parents:

Remember to be both firm and flexible.

The 5 Basics of Parenting Adolescents (continued)

MODEL AND CONSULT

Teens need parents to help them make good choices and guide them while they grow into adults. Talk to your teen, support him or her, and teach by example!

Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Set a good example by behaving the way you want your teens to behave.
- ◆ Share your opinions with your teen.
- ◆ Model the relationships that you would like your teen to have.
- ◆ Give teens truthful answers when they ask questions. Keep in mind their level of understanding.
- ◆ Take pride in your family customs. Share your family's culture and history with your teen.
- ◆ Support your teen's positive school and work habits and interests.
- ◆ Help teens plan for their future and talk about their options.
- ◆ Give teens the chance to solve their own problems and make decisions.

Key Message for Parents:
Be a good example for your teen.

PROVIDE AND ADVOCATE

Teens need parents to give them healthy food, clothing, shelter, and health care. They also need a caring home and loving adults in their lives.

Key Message for Parents:
Trust your teen while guiding her or him to better choices.

Tips for Parents:

- ◆ Meet with people in your neighborhood, schools, and local groups.
- ◆ Locate the best schools and youth programs for your teen.
- ◆ Choose the safest neighborhood you can for your teen.
- ◆ Make sure your teen gets yearly health check-ups and the mental health care he or she needs.
- ◆ Find people and local groups that will help you be a better parent.



RESOURCES

Positive Parenting: Key Health for Parents

www.familyhealth.org/parents.html

Articles in English and Spanish

Parenting: Ahoor Omy Kids

www.ahwgroup.org/ahwpublications/paohomykids.html

Articles in English and some in Spanish. C. Lowe & Korman

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

¹Simpson AR. Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action. Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health, 2001. <http://www.web.mit.edu/worklife/rpteens.html>. Adapted with permission.

FOR PARENTS and ADULT CAREGIVERS

Peace Begins at Home

Parents play a major role in lowering violence by raising their teens in safe and loving homes. With all the violence on TV, in our neighborhoods, and in schools, it is important that parents teach their teens non-violent ways to solve problems. Is your home a loving, supportive, and safe place for your teen?

- Are you able to keep your teen from seeing violence in your home or community?** - Do not allow family members to act violently in your home. Sometimes you can't stop your teen from seeing violence in the streets, at school or at home. Make sure your teen has someone to talk to about his or her feelings.
- What is your teen watching on TV, internet, in movies, and video games?** - Check out what your teen is watching and who they chat with on the internet. Help your teen choose shows, movies, games, and web sites that do not encourage violence or risky behaviors. Place TVs and computers in the living room rather than your teen's bedroom.
- Be aware of your own behavior**- Be a good example for your teen. Youth often follow their parents' lead. Teach your teen values such as respect and honesty. When you are angry, do you yell or use physical force? Show your teen how to deal with conflicts in a peaceful way.
- Keep guns out of reach** - If you have a gun in your home, make sure that it is not loaded. Lock up the gun in one place and keep the extra bullets in another part of your home.
- Talk about bullies** - Bullying doesn't end in elementary school. Talk with your teen about how bullies can cause harm by using physical force or hurtful words. Teens may not realize they are being bullied or that they themselves are bullies.
- Talk about gangs** - Find out whether your teen is exposed to gangs. Keep in mind that teens in gangs tend to spend less time with adults, and have fewer positive adult role models.¹ It's important for your teen to have supportive and caring relationships with adults.
- Pay attention to your teen's actions toward others** - Always teach your teen to solve his or her problems without violence. Talk about the negative consequences of using violence. Encourage your teen to ask you for advice on how to solve conflicts without arguments or fights.
- Teach your teen ways to avoid danger** - Encourage your teen to get involved in school activities or after-school programs supervised by responsible adults. Make sure your teen chooses the safest routes when going to and from places or when taking public transportation.
- Get the schools involved** - Ask school staff to teach students how to solve problems without yelling, threatening, or fighting. Suggest having peer conflict management groups, community mediation centers, or anger management programs in the school. Do not accept violence, harassment, or bullying from or towards your teen.
- How do you show your teen love and support?** - Every teen needs love, trust and honesty in their home to feel safe and supported. Praise your teen when he/she does something well. As much as possible, let your teen know that you love him or her.

RESOURCES

Webb Awards for Excellence: www.webbawards.com/awards/index.asp - Website awarding excellence and quality.
National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center: <http://www.yvprc.org/html/349908.html> - Provides a wealth of information and materials.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Sources:

- 1) Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation. Talking with Kids about Tough Issues. <http://www.talkingwithkids.org/booklet.html>
- 2) American Academy of Pediatrics and American Psychological Association. Raising Children to Resist Violence. 1995. <http://helping.apa.org/articles/article.php?id=15>
- 3) Pratt H, Greydanus D. Adolescent Violence: Concepts for a New Millennium. *Adolescent Medicine*. 2000; 11: 103-25.

FOR PARENTS and ADULT CAREGIVERS

Does My Teen Need Help?

Physical Warning Signs:

- ▶ Cuts on arms or legs or other physical signs of self-harm
- ▶ Physical injuries without good explanations
- ▶ Rapid or major weight loss or weight gain
- ▶ Many stomach, head, and/or back aches
- ▶ Worsening of a chronic condition

Behavioral or Emotional Warning Signs:

- ▶ Major change in eating and/or sleeping habits
- ▶ Signs of frustration, stress, or anger
- ▶ Unusual or increasing fear, anxiety, or worry
- ▶ Relationship difficulties with family, friends, classmates, or teachers
- ▶ Aggressive or violent behavior
- ▶ Sudden loss of self confidence or sense of security
- ▶ Skipping school, not participating in class, and/or a drop in grades
- ▶ Risky behaviors, breaking laws, stealing, hurting people
- ▶ Changes or problems with energy level or concentration
- ▶ Signs of alcohol or drug use
- ▶ Sudden mood swings
- ▶ Losing interest in things that were once enjoyed
- ▶ Feeling down, hopeless, worthless, or guilty
- ▶ Constant concern about physical appearance or decrease in personal hygiene
- ▶ Isolation from others and often spends time alone
- ▶ Secretive about activities and whereabouts

If you notice any of the above warning signs, talk with your teen and then call your teen's health care provider. Be ready to discuss how serious the problem is, when the problem started, and any changes in your teen's school or family situation. Don't wait too long before seeking help.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEEN

- When and why did this problem start?
- How much is this problem troubling you?
- Is the problem getting in the way of your school work or relationships with friends or family members?
- Have you been having any thoughts about dying or hurting yourself?
- How can I help you?

Don't be afraid to ask your teen what's going on in his/her life. It will not cause any harm. A teenager in trouble needs support from caring parents.

MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES

- ▶ Loss of touch with reality
- ▶ In great danger of harming him/herself
- ▶ In great danger of harming others

If you have a teen who is in danger, call 911 or your local emergency services.

DO NOT leave a teen alone in any situation. Remove all weapons from your home, school, and your teen's reach.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Sources:

- 1) Goodman RF. Choosing a Mental Health Professional for Your Child. New York University Child Study Center. 2000. <http://www.aboutourkids.org>
- 2) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Mental Health Information Center. Child and Adolescent Mental Health. 2003. http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/CA_0004/default.asp

FOR PARENTS and ADULT CAREGIVERS

Finding Help for My Teen

WHERE TO START

Your Teen: Talk with your teen and ask him/her:

- 1) When did the problem start and what time have you noticed it?
- 2) Is this problem affecting the way of school, work, or relationships with friends/family?
- 3) What can I do to help? When can we plan to call me about the next steps to take?

Health Care Provider (Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Physician's Assistant):

Set up an appointment with your teen's health care provider. Use your doctor's or your family's medical and mental health history and recent changes in your teen's life. Make sure your teen shares information with the provider. The provider will take a history of physical problems, have a physical check-up, and discuss symptoms. The provider can give advice and recommend quality mental health providers.

Private Health Insurance Plan:

Call the mental or behavioral health intake number (usually a 1-800 number) or the member services number of your teen's health insurance plan. These numbers are often located on the back of the health insurance card. The health insurance plan can tell you about the mental health and substance use services it covers and schedule your teen for an appointment.

Community Behavioral Health Services:

Each county in the nation and many other states have a county or regional mental or behavioral health services department that you can call to make appointments and learn about the mental health and substance use services in your area. Community behavioral health usually provides services to people who have limited income, receive Medicaid or benefits, and/or do not have health insurance.

School Guidance Counselor:

Your teen's school guidance counselor can offer information on local resources and counseling services offered at school and in the community. Contact the school counselor especially if your teen's behavioral problems are getting in the way of school.

Clergy:

Clergy can sometimes offer counseling and information on peer support groups, and mental health and drug or alcohol related services. These services may be provided at your place of worship or by health care-based organizations.

Crisis Services:

If your teen has severe symptoms, there is no time to wait for an appointment. Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room. Always get help right away if your teen is in danger of hurting him/herself, hurting others, or is unable to function.

CHOOSE A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER & TREATMENT PLAN

Ask your teen's mental health provider these questions:

- ▶ What do you enjoy about working with and caring for teens? How many teens do you see each week?
- ▶ What information will be kept private between you and my teen? What information will be shared with me?
- ▶ How involved will I and my family be in my teen's treatment/counseling?
- ▶ What types of treatment are available? What are the risks and benefits of each treatment option?
- ▶ How can I tell if my teen is improving?
- ▶ What are your fees? Do you accept my teen's health insurance plan? Are your fees based upon the patient's ability to pay?

Ask your teen if he/she is comfortable with the mental health provider.

STAND UP FOR YOUR TEEN!

- ▶ Encourage your teen to ask for help.
- ▶ Learn about your teen's mental health or drug/alcohol problem and the available treatments/resources.
- ▶ Tell those who treat your teen about his/her strengths, skills, and talents. Ask mental health providers to include your teen's strengths in his/her treatment plan.
- ▶ Keep all of the documents from your teen's health care providers, teachers, and therapists. Write down any changes in your teen's mood and behavior on a calendar.
- ▶ Make sure therapists and agencies do what they promise for your teen.
- ▶ Ask for a second opinion from another mental health provider when you or your teen feels it would be helpful.

Ask your teen how you can help him/her.

Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing feedback@ahwg.net or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.

Sources:
1) Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Taking Charge of Your Child's Mental Health: A Parent's Guide. 2003. www.ccounty.allegheny.pa.us/dhs/BH/TkgChgrChrMnlHlth.pdf
2) Goodman RF. Choosing a Mental Health Professional for Your Child. New York University Child Study Center, 2000. www.abnstrarkids.org