

## **Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager**

### **1.1 Parent Engagement**

WestEd presents the Parent Engagement Migrant Modules; a module series developed on behalf of the California Department of Education, English Learner Support Division.

Growing Self-Confident Children Through Goal Setting and Growth Mindset

Migrant Education Office - English Learner Support Division - California Department of Education

Visit the CDE website for more information ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)).

This presentation was posted in October of 2019.

### **1.2 Navigating the Module**

The following information will help you navigate this module:

- Use the menu on the left side panel and the navigation bar on the bottom of the screen to control this module.
- The tab key can also be used to navigate forward through the module components; shift+tab can be used to move backward.
- Use the audio button at the bottom right of the screen to turn the slide's audio narration on and off.
- Use the captions button at the bottom of the screen to turn the captions on and off.
- Use the transcript button at the bottom left of the screen to turn the transcript on and off.
- Transcripts for the complete module can be accessed in the resources menu.

The following keyboard shortcuts have been enabled for ease of use:

- N = Move to the next slide
- P = Move the previous slide
- S = Stop/Pause slide
- R = Resume/Play slide
- C = Turn closed captions on/off
- A = Turn audio narration on/off
- T = Turn narration text transcript on/off

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

The module will automatically save any progress made if connected to the Internet.

### **1.3 Introduction**

Welcome to Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager.

This is the sixth module in the supporting family engagement module series.

These modules may be viewed in any order, so it may not be the sixth module for you.

The content of this module focuses on how the adolescent/teenage brain works and how parents can best communicate and build strong, trusting relationships with their teens.

### **1.4 Module Objectives**

During this module we will do the following:

- Learn about how the teenage brain works.
- Learn about why children's attitudes change during the teenage years.
- Discuss how to communicate with your teen in a positive and meaningful way.
- Discuss how to set limits and expectations with your teen.
- Learn about teen peer pressure and social influences.
- Gain strategies on how to make the teenage years successful in your home.

Be sure to think about any thoughts or concerns you may have about the teenage years as we move through the module. There will be time for you to reflect and discuss how you are feeling.

### **1.5 Cultural Connections**

Before we move into this module and look at all the different ways teenagers grow and change in a very short amount of time, it is crucial to think about what is important to you as parents and what you want for your family.

If this is not the first module you have watched, you know that setting family goals and considering what you want for your children is continually important.

But as children enter into the teenage years and get closer to becoming completely independent adults, it may seem harder to hold on to the goals you have set for your children.

Teenagers will push limits and test boundaries.

Take a few minutes to picture your teenager as an adult.

Do they have some of the skills they will need to be that adult?

Have they had experiences that will help them hold the values that your family has?

Keep your answers to these questions in mind as we go through this module and you learn more about adolescent development and the changes that happen during the teen years.

## **1.6 Changes in Adolescence**

This module will give some insight into how the teenage brain works and why you, as parents, will be seeing many changes in your teens as they move through these years.

We will begin with the science and then move on to strategies and ideas on how to improve your own child's teenage years and how to help you as parents cope with these sometimes-trying times.

## **1.7 Brain Chemistry Changes in Adolescence**

During the teenage/adolescent years, a child's brain is always growing and changing.

As children move into adolescence, they think they are maturing and becoming adults and want the freedom to make decisions and have more control over their lives.

The important piece to remember is that their brains are still growing.

This graphic shows the different parts of the brain.

Let's do a brief overview of each part and what it does.

Select the different parts of the brain to learn more.

## **1.8 Brain Chemistry Changes in Adolescence (1)**

The prefrontal cortex is where all reasoning, decision making, and much of the executive function skills happen.

This part of the brain is still developing until a child is approximately 25 years old!

That means that this part of the brain is still growing through the teenage years.

What does this mean for teens?

They are not always able to make good, strong, and responsible decisions.

Parents should stay involved and supportive until this part of the brain is done growing.

Teenagers still need guidance and help in decision-making.

### **1.9 Brain Chemistry Changes in Adolescence (2)**

The ventral striatum is the part of the brain known as the reward center.

What that means for teenagers is that they know how good it feels for them to get a reward: a prize, a good grade, a gift, etc.

During the teen years, children focus on getting the reward and not thinking about whether or not there may be a consequence associated with that reward.

This is another reason parents need to help children stop and think before making a decision.

### **1.10 Brain Chemistry Changes in Adolescence (3)**

The amygdala is the part of the brain that controls emotions, specifically emotions around impulse, fear, and aggression.

As adults, we rely less on this part of our brain because our thinking brain is fully developed.

Teens rely on this part of the brain because their thinking brain is not fully developed.

What does this look like?

Teens will make emotional decisions based on impulse or maybe fear.

As parents, it is helpful to know why teens make the decisions they make.

Emotional decisions for teenagers are common.

Parents can help by reminding them to think before they act.

Parents can encourage children to put their feelings aside and think about what impact a decision will have.

### **1.11 Brain Chemistry Changes in Adolescence (4)**

The hippocampus is the part of the brain is where learning happens.

In adults, it is fully functional and we are able to learn quickly, and usually the first time.

In teens, this part of the brain is still growing.

It is actually growing very fast, which can make learning hard, and sometimes more practice to learn is needed.

Parents may need to tell their teens more than a few times what is right and wrong.

Teens need reminding because the learning part of their brain is still growing.

### **1.12 Activity (1)**

The science part of brain development is a good place to start because it shows that teenagers are not done growing.

Let's learn a little more about what is going on in the brain of a teenager with a reading activity.

### **1.13 Puberty, Hormones, and Growing Up**

The brain isn't the only area of a teenager's body that is changing; there are also changes in hormones.

When teens start puberty, they begin to see and feel changes in their bodies.

These changes occur because of a large dose of hormones produced by the body.

These hormones cause changes they can see, but they also cause changes in their feelings.

These hormones control emotions, impulses, and mood.

It is at this time that parents can see some significant changes in the way their children look and act.

It is normal for teens to try to push away, build independence, and want to become their own person—separate from the family.

While this can be upsetting, it is important to allow them some space to grow and become their own person, while keeping in mind they do not have a fully developed brain; decision making should be limited to less risky things and boundaries and rules should still be set and followed.

Along with puberty and hormones come major changes in the body.

These changes often result in different eating habits and sleeping patterns.

Teens need significantly more sleep than a young child or an adult; some studies say up to 14 hours a day.

Allow your teen to rest when they need it and be sure that they are sleeping good hours at night and not being distracted by technology, phones, or friends.

At this time, many teens begin putting on muscle and mass.

This may lead to weight gain and increased food consumption.

Having healthy food options available will help teens develop good eating habits.

Most teens fill their plates at meals and may even ask for more; this is because they are fueling a growing and changing body.

### **1.14 What to Expect from Emotional Teens**

It may seem strange to hear about the changes a child goes through as they are in the adolescent stage.

This may be because it can be emotional for parents when their children grow and change.

Their child may not look or act like their younger self.

Parents will see increased emotions that result in extreme mood swings, outbursts, and overall frustration over even simple things.

Many teens feel like they don't have control over what is happening in their body, and feel out of control with their emotions.

Teenagers don't realize that this is a very normal part of development.

Teens also feel a need to be more independent.

This will mean they will want to spend less time at home and more time with their friends.

Teens will question why they cannot stay out late or spend more time unsupervised.

Parents may want to deal with these feelings by setting a reasonable time their child can stay out with friends and set up rules about how they can spend their time.

An example of this is that a boy may want to go to his friend's home.

A parent can make sure that the parents are at that friend's home and that they have met their child's friend and even the parents of the child.

The teen years are also a time that girls and boys worry about their bodies, specifically their size and height.

Continue to help teens make healthy eating choices, stay physically active, keep a positive attitude, and appreciate the body they were born with.

### **1.15 Make it personal! (1)**

To understand teens, it may help to put ourselves in their place.

Knowing what you know now about the teenage brain and the hormonal changes teens go through, let's take some time to look back on our personal experiences.

Reflect on the following questions:

- How did you change and grow as you became a teen?
- Will my child make the same decisions I did as a teen?
- Do I want them to make the same decisions I did?

Parents often forget what it was like going through the teenage years.

Reflecting back will help to better understand how to support teens as they go through this time in their lives.

### **1.16 Mental Health and Teens**

While most teenagers have emotional ups and downs, there are some cases where these may be more serious.

It is important to learn about the types of mental health issues that some teens face.

1 in 5 children are struggling with mental health concerns.

Teens often struggle with mental health due to the changes occurring in their lives and bodies: hormones, sexuality, schooling, and peer groups.

The following are some of the symptoms of mental health concerns or emotional struggles seen in teens:

- Depression (crying, being alone, no friends or social isolation)
- Self-harm (cutting, burning, eating disorders, talk of suicide or suicide attempt)
- Drug and substance abuse
- Running away or withdrawing from family
- Decline in schoolwork or school attendance

### **1.17 Suicide in Teens**

There are some cases where mental health issues can become very serious and needed to be treated as such.

This slide will share information about teen suicide and share some resources.

The following behaviors may indicate that a child is thinking of suicide and crying out for help:

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

- Participating in self-injurious behavior (cutting, drug use)
- Participating in risky or dangerous behavior (driving wildly, jumping from things, playing with fire)
- Giving away prized possessions to family and friends
- Pulling away from family and friends
- Showing signs of depression and withdrawal (not eating, not attending school, not cleaning self or wearing unclean clothes)

### **1.18 Actions for Concerned Parents**

The following are actions you can take if you are concerned about suicidal thoughts or actions from your teen:

- Contact the school counselor for resources ASAP.
- Remind your child of how important they are to your family.
- Keep a close eye on your child until they can be evaluated by a professional.
- Call the Teen Crisis Hotline (nation-wide number) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- Call 911; officers are trained to evaluate and help.

### **1.19 Cultural Connections: Communication and Traditions**

Children everywhere go through the same emotional changes during the teenage years.

It may seem as though teens from other countries behave differently than American teens behave.

Some of these differences are because parents in other countries are influenced by others around them.

In the United States, children seem to change from generation to generation.

When children in one generation grow up, they may want to parent differently than their parents did.

Think about how you communicated with your parents and how you communicate with your children today.

Are there differences?

Think about what traditions you had growing up, which of those traditions you still have, and which you have chosen not to continue.

Families need to do what feels comfortable for them and what makes them happy.



This may mean that children have a different relationship or communication style with you than what you had with your parents growing up.

Some parents may enjoy these relationship differences while others may prefer to do the same things their parents did.

Again, what is important is to be comfortable and happy with your relationship and family culture.

Being introduced to new ways of parenting and communicating can be scary and frustrating.

Listening to children share their wishes and concerns is helpful to both parents and children; children feel heard, even if things don't change, and parents may hear something new they are comfortable with trying.

### **1.20 Generational Differences**

When we talk about generations, there is usually a lot of disagreement.

Many people develop criteria for what a specific generation of children look and act like; sometimes this criteria rings true and other times the reality is very different.

Each generation is known for something in particular.

Older generations are known for working hard and struggling, newer generations are known for having adults make life easy for them.

Many newer generations will never fully understand the struggles of older generations.

There are many differences in generations beyond how hard they work.

Our current generation of teens has an increased sense of anxiety and stress.

They live in a world with great uncertainty and they feel the weight of tremendous expectations.

They often have families who are helping them—perhaps helping them too much—to navigate the many obstacles of life; and because of this help, the expectation is often that they should be perfect and perform at high levels.

These expectations lead to stress and anxiety like we've never seen in teens before.

We also see a significant increase in mental health concerns.

Teens today do not interact with peers in the same way previous generations have and this is leading to teens feeling isolated from their peers.

Children spend more time on phones communicating digitally than they do communicating in person.

They also spend significantly less time outside playing and interacting.

They are generally at home handling huge loads of homework or playing video games and having screen time.

The effects of all this may last much longer than we anticipate.

### **1.21 Scenarios: What is important to a teen versus a parent?**

You may have heard this popular saying: “Walk a mile in a man’s shoes.”

This saying means that in order to get a good understanding of someone, you should see what it might be like to live the way they live.

While we cannot go back in time to be teenagers, we can look at some scenarios to help us get a better idea of the differences between what is important to a teenager and what is important to a parent.

Select each image to see the scenarios for Alandra and Marietta.

Download the A Day in the Life handout from the Resources tab if you would like to follow along with a hard copy.

### **1.22 A day in the life of a teen: Alandra**

Alandra is 15 years old and lives with her parents, two brothers (ages 8 and 14), and older sister (age 21).

Alandra wakes up at 5:15 a.m. each day so she can curl her hair, get breakfast ready for her siblings (if her older sister has work), and be at the bus stop at 6:05 a.m.

After school, Alandra and her 14-year-old brother usually ride the bus from the high school to their 8-year-old brother’s elementary school so that they can walk him home.

The elementary school does not have bus service and their younger brother doesn’t like to stay at the afterschool program.

They only live two blocks from school and the walk is short and safe.

When Alandra and her brothers get home, they wait for their older sister, Ingrid, to get off work and often convince her to take them to do something.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

Alandra's favorite thing is Dutch Brothers Coffee, so if she has babysitting money, she usually asks her older sister to take her there.

After their excursion, they come home and clean the kitchen so their mom can get dinner ready after work.

After her mom comes home, Alandra usually starts her homework while dinner is being made.

She loves her dance class at school and if she is learning a new dance routine, she will usually show her mom after dinner.

Then she and Ingrid will finish their homework together and help their two younger brothers with homework, if needed.

When asked about the best part of her day she says, "I really love my dance class at school.

The teacher is nice and I like to try new things. I also really like to walk my baby brother home from school."

When asked about the hardest part she says, "I hate getting up early. And I hate when I miss the bus because Ingrid is always mad at me when I do."

Questions to consider for Alandra:

- What is important to Alandra?
- What do you think Alandra sees as her responsibilities?
- What do you think Alandra's parents see as her responsibilities?
- What expectations does Alandra have for herself?
- What expectations do you think Alandra's parents have for her?

### **1.23 A day in the life of a parent: Marietta**

Marietta is 38 years old and lives with her husband, two sons (ages 8 and 14), and two daughters (ages 15 and 21).

Marietta wakes up at 4:45 a.m. so she can eat, make lunch for herself and her husband, makes sure there is food her children can cook for breakfast when they wake up, and walks to meet the friends that take her to her job.

This meeting spot changes depending on where her family is living and what farm she works for.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

Right now, they live close to where she works, and she has friends to ride to work with-which means she gets to enjoy a short walk to the meet-up spot.

She says that the time right after she wakes up is her favorite because she is alone and it is quiet.

She often tells her oldest daughter, Ingrid, "The sunrise was perfect this morning."

She arrives at work just as the sun is brightly in the sky.

She meets her lead at the greenhouse and gathers her tools for the day.

She spends the next four hours picking strawberries (right now); other times she picks corn or peaches.

As the family moves, the crop that Marietta picks changes too.

After work, she enjoys the ride home with friends and starts thinking about what to cook for her family.

This is another favorite part of her day; she loves cooking and watching her family enjoy the meal.

She uses her friend's phone to text Ingrid to see if the kids have made it home from school.

She always has worries about her 8-year-old son because his school does not have a bus and there were no spots in the afterschool program when they moved to the area.

This means that she has to rely on Ingrid and neighbors to make sure he gets home safely.

Next year, she really hopes to be in the area before the afterschool program is full.

Once she arrives home, she tiredly greets her children and hears of the school day events.

They share as they sit and chat at the table: the 8-year-old shares his homework project; the 15-year-old complains about her homework.

She begins making dinner with the left-over chicken from last night.

Before she is finished making dinner her husband gets home.

She meets him at the door, helps him get settled, and serves him dinner.

Then the children serve themselves dinner.

Within moments, the teenagers have finished eating and are off to their rooms, texting friends about school and arguing about who gets to be in the bathroom first.

The 8-year old son remains and asks his dad to help with his project.

Marietta cleans up the plates and finally serves herself a semi-warm dinner.

She sits next to her 8-year old on the couch as he describes his project, and together they make a plan for getting it done by Friday.

She overhears the bathroom argument getting louder but before she can say anything Ingrid shouts, "I need to wake up for my college class and that is more important than high school. I am showering first!" and slams the door.

Questions to consider for Marietta:

- What is important to Marietta?
- What do you think Marietta sees as her responsibilities?
- What expectations does Marietta have for her children?

### **1.24 Communicating with Your Teen**

Let's review some important topics regarding communicating with your teen.

Select each topic to learn more.

### **1.25 Communication Styles**

There are many different ways parents and teens can choose to communicate.

This chart shows the four main ways people typically communicate.

The way we choose to communicate sends a message about how a parent is feeling about the conversation.

A teen may choose to communicate in an unhealthy way.

During adolescence, many teens will communicate in a passive aggressive style where they choose to act like nothing matters.

They may act as if they don't care about you or themselves.

Try not to take this personally; teens act this way because their brain is still developing.

A parent may react in an aggressive way because they are angry and scared and often communicate in a way that the teen will interpret as the parent not caring about their decisions or their lives.

The healthiest way for a parent and a teen to communicate is in the assertive style.

Each person shows that they care about the other, but that they also care about themselves.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

Parents and teens need to talk through problems, seeing all sides of an issue, and parents need to let teens be involved and have some ownership in the decisions they make.

When communication occurs in this way, teens feel heard and important; they feel as though they aren't being talked down to as a child, but appreciated for the young adult they are becoming.

Culturally, this might be challenging for many parents.

Many parents may not have been raised in an environment that allowed teens to have a say in many decisions or have a voice in a conversation.

But keeping teens from sharing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings may lead to teens lashing out and cutting parents out of any communication

Communication is essential.

As parents work with their teens through these years, they can teach them to have a strong but respectful voice. Using a positive and balanced communication style can help move a teens and their family members through these years in a healthy way.

### **1.26 Expectations and Limits**

Limits and expectations are a requirement when raising a teen.

Teens are not consistently able to make safe and smart decisions and it is a parent's job to help them make good choices-even if teens may not like it.

The best way to set limits and expectations with teens is to talk.

Teens need to understand what is expected and what will not be tolerated.

Being consistent and loving is the key to these discussions.

Think back to the communication styles discussed before.

Parents can be assertive in their expectations but allow teens to ask questions or even make suggestions.

Without limits and expectations a teen might not think parents care about what they are doing; they might think they are allowed to make all of the decisions for themselves.

When parents step in it helps teens with these expectations.

Let's take a few minutes to write down what those expectations and limits might be.

Use the following questions and topics to guide you.

For each topic, ask yourself these questions:

What limits will you have in your home?

What expectations do you have of your teen?

How will you communicate your expectations?

Here are your topics:

- Curfew (what time your teen can stay out until at night)
- Knowing where your teen is
- Looking through personal items (phones, backpacks)
- Bedtime
- Chores
- Schoolwork/Homework

Unless teens know and understand limits and expectations, they aren't able to meet them. If they want to challenge the limit or rule, remind them of why that rule is in place.

Remind them that parents need to keep children safe and teach children how to make good choices to grow into responsibility adults.

### **1.27 Accountability**

Holding teens accountable for their actions is a difficult but essential part of parenting. Accountability is not something that comes naturally; it is something teenagers need to learn.

To learn accountability, teenagers must be held responsible for their actions.

You may already do things at home to teach this to your children.

Taking responsibility is not easy for children as they prefer to blame others.

One of the best ways to teach this skill is to be a role model and to hold all family members accountable for their actions.

There is an article from the American Academy of Pediatrics that discusses how to help teenagers get ready to be adults.

Take a few minutes to read the article; your facilitator will pass it out or it can be downloaded from the Resources tab.

Once you have read the article, take a minute to think about what might work with your teenager.

### **1.28 Technology**

Technology is a piece of raising a teen today that many of our parents did not have to deal with.

Select the video to watch how social media use impacts teenagers.

Technology can be wonderful resource for all of us, but for a growing and developing teen, it can be a big distraction and may lead to many other challenges and struggles.

Teen use of computers, tablets, phones, social media, video games, television and more, is at an all-time high and experts continue to say that too much technology time can have long-lasting effects.

Children and teens lose out on their ability to talk to one another face-to-face.

Teens can also put themselves in dangerous situations with online chat rooms and friends. They share personal information about themselves to the world by posting on social media and other types of platforms.

Studies show too much technology use can lead to depression and anxiety among many teens, and some say the overuse of technology is leading to higher suicide rates, acts of violence, and an overall disconnection with humans.

Finding a balance for technology in a home is challenging.

Typically, children and teens should not be exposed to screens more than 2-3 hours per day.

They should have their social media accounts and video game platforms monitored for bullying behavior or odd interactions with others.

Friends online should be limited to only someone they know in person and not people who are only a friend "online."

Finally, parents need to monitor their child's mental health when it comes to technology. This can be a difficult road for a teen to navigate, which is why parents need to be involved in their child's technology use.

As parents, it is okay to look at your child's phone.

You can monitor their social media accounts by getting your own account and linking to theirs.



### **1.29 Supporting Your Teen**

Supporting your teen can be challenging, but it also is a time to celebrate your child growing up and becoming an adult.

Parents know their child best; using what you know about your child will help to support them.

Here are some ways you can use your knowledge to support your child:

- Find what upsets your teen and try talk to them before or after their exposure to that stressor.
- Find your teen's strengths and interests and use them to help control emotions.
- Think about places that make your teen feel comfortable and use them to create safe spaces to talk.

Remember that we are trying to develop adults who can be contributing members of our world-adults who can make good decisions and who are able to be a good citizen and human to all.

When you are raising your teen and taking on some of the challenges that might face you and your family, remember that through this part of parenting you are developing your legacy has a parent.

Who this child becomes says a lot about who you were as a parent.

Together with your teen, and using many of the things we have discussed so far and will continue to discuss, you will be able to help your child be a successful and mature adult!

### **1.30 More Cultural Connections**

The section on communication with teens may have been very different than what you were accustomed to growing up.

Each culture and family have their own set of values and way of communicating.

Those communication styles may have worked very well in the past, and perhaps they still work well now.

What we have learned is that often, when children come to a new country or are raised in a country different than their parents, those children have different ways of communication.

This may be because the children are exposed to so many different types of people.

This diversity is very exciting!

Children have the potential to be well-rounded and know how different people and families work in this country.

Families should keep their values close to heart while also allowing their children to have some experiences that may be different from their own.

This next section will look at those differences in more detail.

### **1.31 Teen Life: Differences in Culture (1)**

As you move through the many stages of raising a teen, there will be huge cultural differences between the experiences you had being raised as a child in a different country or culture, and the experiences your child has as a teen in the U.S.

Some of the differences you notice between the familiar way you were raised and way your child is growing up can make you feel very uncomfortable.

As these cultural differences arise, parents will need to balance their teen's needs with what is comfortable for the family.

Select each tab to learn more about a few situations that are common for teens in the U.S.

For each situation, think about what could become a struggle and how you might handle it.

### **1.32 Teen Life: Differences in Culture (2)**

In the U.S., children and teens are often presented with opportunities to spend time away from home; they might be asked to sleep over at a friend's house or to travel for sports or school.

They may even have the chance to travel far away for a school trip, to such places as Washington D.C. or Sacramento.

The experience of travel is important as it allows young adults to see and learn about the world.

And spending the night with a friend can be a fun experience and good socialization for your child.

### **1.33 Teen Life: Differences in Culture (3)**

The idea of your child having a boyfriend or girlfriend can be a scary thing for parents, but it is likely going to happen at some point for your teen.

It is okay to set limits and boundaries around dating.

However, not allowing a teen to date at all, or to ever have a boy or girl in their lives, might lead to them feeling like they must sneak around and not be honest.

It is important for teens to hear open and honest communication from you regarding your worried feelings about boyfriends and girlfriends.

### **1.34 Teen Life: Differences in Culture (4)**

As teens gain independence and parent trust, they may want to start going places with friends.

They may want to go to the movies or the mall for the afternoon, to the beach for the day, or to visit a friend's grandparent's house in a neighboring town.

The idea that your teen wants to spend so much time going places with their friends may seem strange if you spent most of your young life with your family as your friends, but remember that these experiences may help build confidence in your teen and might help them to learn how to communicate better with other people.

Keeping family close and family values strong is most important; always consider these values when making decisions, but remember to also consider the experiences presented to your child as opportunities they might be given.

Teens need to be allowed the chance to change and grow and to do things away from the home and family, but never at the expense of what a parent feels comfortable with.

### **1.35 What role does your teen play in your home?**

As your teen grows, you will have to decide what role they will play in the house.

Some teens want more independence and no longer feel as connected to the family home.

It is important that the parent define their role while also giving them some opportunity to spread their wings and explore the outside world.

It's important to remember that the influences of the U.S. culture may affect how a teen responds and reacts to situations. Remember to communicate expectations and set boundaries.

Think about what roles you want your teen to take on at home:

- Will they be in charge of childcare for younger siblings?
- Are they the family's translator in regards to school and friends?
- Do they have chores around the house they are expected to keep up with?
- Do they need to provide financially for the family?
- Are there other caretaking duties they need to adhere to?

These roles should be well defined with your teen so they know what to expect and can talk through their concerns, needs, and wants.

These roles allow teens to know the important part they have in the family.

### **1.36 Teen Decision Making**

Overall, it is important to keep your family's cultural needs in place as a high priority as you are raising your teen.

This can only be done by communicating effectively and being understanding of the potentially clashing culture that is surrounding them at school and with friends.

Assure them there is a balance, but remind them of the importance of family and their heritage to you and your familial group.

Allow for some decision making, but also stay firm on the things that are most important to you.

### **1.37 Activity (2)**

In the teen years, parents can sometimes forget what their child's strengths are.

Teen behaviors can make their child look very different, but they are still there.

Take a few minutes to write down what your child's strengths are.

Then we can look at how those strengths can be used to help teens make decisions and navigate the world.

### **1.38 Peer Influences on Teenage Behavior**

It was mentioned earlier in the module that as teens get older and meet new friends, they may want to try new things.

Teens may also make decisions based on what their friends do.

This has to do with the fact that their brain is still developing.

Teens tend to act first and think later.

When teens are in groups of two or more, their impulse control may be even harder to control.

Teens also have to deal with peer pressure.

This is when a friend tries to convince another friend to do what they want by teasing, pestering, or getting more friends to ask them.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

The teen feels that if they do not follow along, they will be the only one who doesn't.

Things that are important to teens are not always important to parents.

An example of this can be family time.

As a parent, family time may be most important to you, but a teen may only want to spend time with their friends.

Other common examples are clothing, jewelry, or even phones.

For parents, these things may not be important, but for a teen, it can be a sign of status-how much money that teen has. For a teen, having the same things as their friends means they are equal.

As adults, we know that this is not so important.

The situations teens find themselves in can influence their behavior.

Help your teen to remember who they are and what their strengths are so they can decide what is important to them.

Asking your child about their friends let's you get to know them.

Spending time with those friends will help you to get to know them even better and will help those friends get to know your family.

### **1.39 Sharing Strategies**

We have learned about the adolescent brain, teen behaviors, and how to communicate with a teenager.

Many strategies were shared in each of the sections we have covered so far.

This last section will provide specific strategies that include an opportunity to practice what was learned and possible conversation starters.

Consider what might work in your interactions with your child as we go through each of these strategies.

### **1.40 Role-Play Scenario**

Let's start with talking through some typical teen situations.

### **1.41 Creating Rules and Consequences**

Rules are meant to keep children safe and to teach responsibility.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

Parents and children should agree on the rules together.

When parents have different rules, teens do not know what is important to the family.

You must decide what is important to you as parents.

Perhaps having your teen home at night is important because you worry; perhaps it is them finishing their chores; or perhaps it is them getting their schoolwork done before watching television.

Once you know what is important to you, you can set the rules to support that.

Decide what will happen if the rules are broken.

While you may not think about your child breaking the rules, it helps to know how you will handle it when you set the rules.

Sometimes, if the rule is broken, parents are very angry and may not be able to think about what is a logical consequence in the moment.

Rules are important, but they may change as your teen shows responsibility or as they get older.

It is okay to change the rules, but it may be best to wait until they have been able to follow the rules for a consistent amount of time first.

### **1.42 Ways to Communicate with Your Teen**

This module includes a lot of information about communicating.

Teens who have a relationship with their parents, and can talk to them about good times and bad times, have better relationships with others as adults.

Talking to your teenager may be easy, but at some point, your teen will get angry, sad, or overwhelmed by those emotions that were discussed earlier, and they will not want to talk.

They may be so emotional that they aren't able to get the right words out.

Coming up with different ways to communicate may make things easier for them and you.

When your child was young, maybe you tried a time out, where your little one spent some time by themselves to calm down.

Your teen might need the same thing.

Sometimes it may only need to be 5 or 10 minutes, other times it may be more than 30 minutes.

For some people, saying things out loud is too difficult, especially when talking about feelings.

Try writing a short note.

It could be one or two lines or it could be longer.

Encourage them to write back.

Your note might even encourage them to talk to you.

Some teens need a quiet space to be alone or they just need time to be ready to talk about something that is bothering them.

Remind your teen that you are available when they are ready to talk.

Giving your child space doesn't mean that you are ignoring them, it just means that you are letting them think about things on their own.

Keep talking and keep asking them questions; this reminds them that they are loved and what they do matter.

### **1.43 Take-Home Activity**

Here is a take-home activity that you can complete with your teen:

- Create a list of what is most important to you and your family.
- Have your teen complete a list of what is most important to them.
- Compare the lists and see where they are the same and where they differ.
- Have an honest and open discussion about those differences and how you will handle them in your home.

### **1.44 Make a plan. (1)**

Many new ideas were shared in this module.

You may be excited and ready to try some of the strategies you have learned.

As parents, you are very busy and sometimes working and taking care of the family feels like it takes up most of your day.

To support you in trying these new strategies, there is a resource called Action Planning.

Download this resource and answer the questions about what you are going to try with your children before the next meeting.

Keep this resource with you so you can make notes as you try new things at home.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager

We hope that you share your experiences with the group next time.

You may find that others have had the same types of experiences.

**1.45 Congratulations and Thank You!**

This concludes Module 6: Understanding and Communicating with Your Teenager.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this module.