

## Happy teenagers and teenage wellbeing

**Happy teenagers are teenagers with warm relationships. You can boost teenage wellbeing and happiness by encouraging your child to try new things, have goals, value personal strengths and focus on the good things in life.**



### Teenage happiness and wellbeing

Happiness is a state of mind or a mood. Happy teenagers are usually teenagers who are satisfied with their lives and relationships.

Wellbeing comes from physical, mental and emotional health. It's also about having positive emotions, taking part in different activities, having good relationships and social connections, finding meaning in life and feeling that you're doing well.



Happiness and wellbeing are related, but they're not the same thing. There are no clearly defined links between them. Teenagers can be happy because of some of the things that make up wellbeing, but they don't need all these things to be happy.

### Raising happy teenagers: tips

You can boost your child's happiness with praise and encouragement, clear rules and boundaries, a healthy family lifestyle and warm family relationships.

#### Praise, encouragement and positive attention

- Give your child [praise](#) when he behaves in ways you want to encourage, like helping out, doing chores or getting homework done. For example, 'I really appreciate it when you put your dirty clothes in the laundry bin'.
- Give your child attention – for example, go to watch her playing sport, send her a friendly text message or just give her a special smile.
- Encourage your child to try new things – for example, if your child is interested in playing a new sport, you could offer to take him along to the local club's registration day.
- Value your child's strengths, and praise her for who she is. For example, 'You're really good at looking after the younger children in your Scouts group'. This helps to build self-esteem and protects her from comparing herself to other people.
- Let your child know that you're proud of him when he tries, especially when things are tough. For example, 'I was so proud of you for running all the way in your cross country race, even though I could see you were tired'.

#### Rules and boundaries

Clear and fair [rules](#) help teenagers feel safe when lots of things in their lives are changing. If you involve your child in making the rules, she'll be more likely to stick to them. Negotiating rules with your child is also a way of showing that you respect her growing maturity.

#### Healthy lifestyle

- Encourage good [sleep habits](#): teenagers need about 9¼ hours of sleep each night.
- Help your child aim for at least 60 minutes of [physical activity](#) each day.
- Encourage your child to make [healthy food choices](#) to fuel his growth and development.
- Help your child keep a healthy balance between study, work and play. This might mean looking at how many nights your child is out doing things, how much down time she has, how much she can

contribute to family life through chores, how many family meals you have together and so on.

### Family relationships

- Share and make memories together. For example, take photos or videos on special family days or at school events and look over them with your child, or talk about and remember things you've enjoyed as a family.
- Make time to talk about individual and family successes. For example, you could try going around the table at family meals and giving everyone a turn at sharing something that went well for them during the day.
- Establish and maintain [family rituals](#) – for example, cooking pancakes on Saturday mornings, watching special movies together, going for milkshakes after school on Fridays and so on.



For older teenagers, happiness depends a lot on having freedom and not having too many restrictions. It's about being respected, developing independently of parents or carers, making their own friendships and social life, and being taken seriously as individuals rather than being seen as stereotyped teenagers.

### Boosting teenage wellbeing

Here are some ideas for fostering different aspects of teenage wellbeing.

#### Physical health

When your child takes care of himself physically, it's good for his wellbeing. For example, being active, having a break from technology, getting outside and getting enough sleep can help your child's mood and improve his physical fitness.

#### Mental and emotional health

Good mental and emotional health is important for teenage wellbeing. For example, teenagers with good mental and emotional health can develop [resilience](#) to cope better with difficult situations. If your child develops resilience, she can 'bounce back' when things go wrong, which will help her get through life's ups and downs and boost her wellbeing.

#### Positive emotions

If your child can focus on the good things, take a positive approach to life's challenges and know what he's feeling good about or what's going well for him, it can help him focus on positive emotions.

#### Different activities

Trying new things and getting involved in different activities keeps your child's options open. This can also help your child find things that she's good at.

#### Relationships and social connections

Relationships and social connections are vital for teenage wellbeing. Your child needs close and supportive family and friends. And good parent-child relationships tend to lead to good [teenage friendships](#).

#### Meaning in life

Meaning in life can come from doing good things for others. Your child could look for everyday ways to help family or friends – for example, giving someone his seat on the bus, or helping someone pick up papers they've dropped in the street. Or he could get [involved in community activity](#). This type of 'giving' lights up the reward centre in the brain, which makes your child feel good.

Feeling connected to something bigger can also help to give your child's life a sense of purpose. Meaning might come from spirituality, life philosophy, or a commitment to a cause like the environment. People with meaning have less stress and get more out of what they do.

#### Goals and achievement

If your child has goals that fit with her values, are fun and attainable, and let her use her strengths, it can give her a sense of purpose and achievement.



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### **More to explore**

- Extracurricular activities, interests and hobbies for teenagers
  - What parents mean to teenagers
  - Supporting your teenager's growing independence
  - Pre-teen and teenage mental health
  - Staying connected: you and your teenager
  - Positive thinking exercise
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