

COFFEE + CONVERSATION

HELPING YOUR TEEN NAVIGATE
THEIR TEEN YEARS

Teenagers, like all of us, sometimes need help and guidance, but it can sometimes be difficult for parents to recognize when to intervene in their teenager's life. Understanding these challenges, and knowing when and how to intervene to help your child overcome them, is an essential role for parents.

HELPING YOUR CHILD THROUGH FRIENDSHIP DRAMA

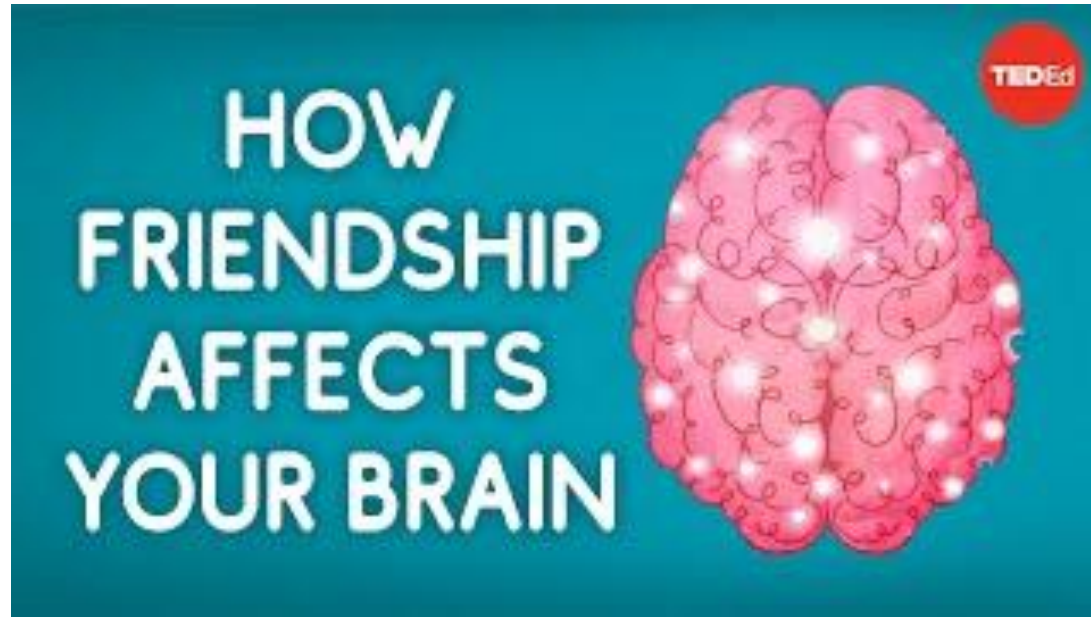
DO:

- **Listen:** Let your teen know you will listen and try to understand their point of view, without putting them down or trying to control them.
- **Empathize:** Find an emotion or a way to let your child know that you are listening.
- **Ask Questions:** Ask open-ended questions that will help you learn more about the situation such as “What were you hoping would happen?” or “How did you feel when she said that?”
- **Ask How You Can Help:** Rather than jumping in with a suggestion or picking up the phone to “fix it,” ask your child what they need from you. For example, “Do you want to hear what I think?” or “Do you need help coming up with a solution?”
- **Talk regularly about friendships:** Find ways to use books, TV shows or examples from your own life to talk about how to be a good friend, how to stand up for victims of bullying or how to be confident when faced with peer pressure.
- **Keep the conversation open:** Friendships change rapidly, your child is going to need to talk often. Encourage open communication in the future by ending conversations with, “If you ever want to talk more about this, I’m here for you.”

HELPING YOUR CHILD THROUGH FRIENDSHIP DRAMA

DON'T:

- **Force your child to stay with or change friends:** Talk about the pro's and con's of remaining with a certain group of friends. Review qualities of healthy friendships. This is a great learning opportunity for your child.
- **Fix the problem yourself:** It may seem easier to jump in and solve the problem for your child. However, managing friendships is a life skill that they will need in the future.
- **Assume your child is the victim:** Your child may appear to be the one being picked on, but there may be more to the story.
- **Ignore hurtful comments:** If your child reports something hurtful, don't brush it aside or tell them that it is "nothing." Empathise with them and then turn the conversation to something positive about your child.
- **Allow bullying:** If you know or suspect that your child or their group of friends is acting in a way that is bullying other students, speak up.



How friendship affects your brain - Shannon Odell

HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR TEEN

Bridging this gap, and learning how to improve communication with your teen is no small feat, but it can be done!

General Tips For Parents:

Watch Your Non-Verbals: Nothing says, “I can’t believe you’re even talking about this” like an eye-roll or a huge sigh. You don’t have to agree with everything your child says, but be aware that your body language may be sending an unintended message.

Skip the Witty Comeback: Focus on listening to what your child is saying, rather than formulating your “...yeah, but...” or “when I was a kid...” response. Critical, sarcastic or belittling remarks bring communication to a halt.

Seek Clarity Before You Pass Judgment: If you’re caught off-guard or a little confused by something your child said, rephrase their general idea. You can say, “What I hear you saying is...” or “Let me see if I have this right.” Give your child a chance to correct your interpretation.

Parenting Tips cont.

Wait to Reply: Resist the urge to interrupt or offer a solution. Give your child time to finish what they are saying. Then, take a deep breath and allow yourself some time to figure out how you want to respond and the best way to say it.

Do Not Fix It: Most of the time, your kids just need to vent, they are not looking for a way to solve the problem. If your child comes to you requesting advice, engage them in the problem-solving process. If you're unclear ask, "Do you want my advice or do you want me just to listen?"

Talk Less: When in doubt, be quiet. It is ok to offer your opinion or ask a few questions, but a conversation can quickly turn into a lecture. If you feel like you're talking too much, interrupting, or feel like your child is shutting down, STOP. Say, "Oops, I'm talking too much. Tell me more about..."

Tips were taken from Nicole Schwarz- Parent Coach's website. Check out her website for more resources!

<https://imperfectfamilies.com/how-to-really-listen-to-your-kids/>

FEELING STRESSED?!

A 2013 survey found that stress is extremely common among teenagers.

In fact, school is the top source of stress for teens. Getting into a good college or deciding what to do after high school is the second-biggest source of tension.

The survey found teens experience both emotional and physical symptoms of stress. Common symptoms include feeling anxious or tired, procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities, feeling overwhelmed, having negative thoughts and experiencing changes in sleeping habits. Problems with concentrating and changes in eating habits are also linked to stress.

It's normal to have some stress in life. But if stress persists at high levels for a long time, it can have lasting negative effects on health.

Everyone is affected by stress at one time or another, and it can feel overwhelming. With the right tools, though, you can learn to manage stress before it takes a toll on your health. Managing daily stress can also lead to a more overall positive outlook on your life and well-being.

Teen Stress

Help your teen identify stressors, learn healthy coping skills, and model positive stress management in your own life.

Sources of Stress



Academics



Extracurricular Activities



Friends/Family



Post-High School Plans

Because of stress...



36% report feeling fatigued



30% report feeling sad or depressed



31% report feeling overwhelmed



23% report unhealthy eating habits

Signs of Stress

- Irritability
- Anger
- Excessive Worry or Anxiety
- Substance Use
- Disordered Eating (overeating or eating too little)
- Psychosomatic Symptoms
- Insomnia/ Sleep Disturbances
- Neglecting Responsibilities
- Negative Thoughts
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- School Avoidance

Talking to Your Teen About Stress

1. Recognize your teen's symptoms and ask them about it.
2. Communicate and discuss balance.
3. Help your teen identify healthy coping mechanisms.
4. Provide support when under stress.
5. Model healthy behaviors.
6. If needed, seek guidance from a professional.

Who Can Help?

Minor Peer Issues/Name Calling

Mrs. Cleary- Teams A, C & E KCleary@stamfordct.gov 203-977-4551

Mrs. Ballantoni- Team B, D & F (Peacemaker Advisor) NBallantoni@stamfordct.gov 203-977-4042

Moderate Peer Issues/Threats/Name Calling

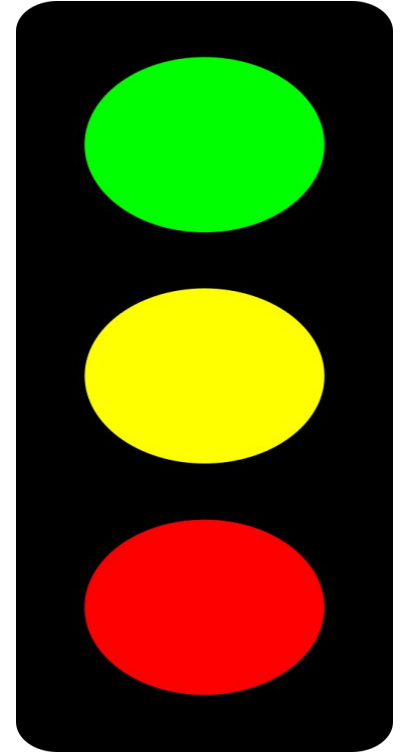
Dr. Hadley- Restorative Student Support Specialist

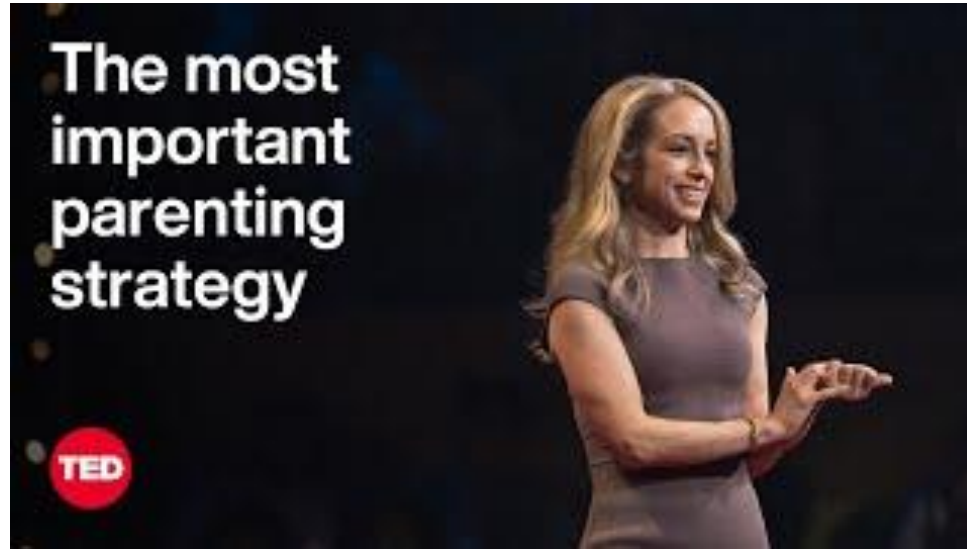
PHadley@stamfordct.gov 203-977-4638

Major Peer Issues/Threats/Name Calling/Physical Harm

Grade Level Administrators- Mr. Tate, Mr. Huertas or Ms. Churchill

(call the main office for assistance)





Everyone loses their temper from time to time — but the stakes are dizzyingly high when the focus of your fury is your own child. Clinical psychologist and renowned parenting whisperer Becky Kennedy is here to help. Not only does she have practical advice to help parents manage the guilt and shame of their not-so-great moments but she also models the types of conversations you can have to be a better parent. (Hint: this works in all other relationships too.) Bottom line? It's never too late to reconnect.

<https://cloonancounselors.weebly.com>

RESOURCES

"Your Child's Friendship Drama: Do's and Don'ts For Parents"

<https://imperfectfamilies.com/your-childs-friendship-drama-dos-and-donts-for-parents/>

"Navigating The Teen Years: A Parent's Handbook for Raising Healthy Teens"

http://www.shared-care.ca/files/booklet_parenting_a_teen.pdf

Kids In The House: The Ultimate Parenting Resource:

<https://www.kidsinthehouse.com/teenager/social-life/friends>

10 Differences Between Good Friends and Toxic Friends

https://youtu.be/774HJQ9AdRk?si=5-7dqokwZD_emFQp