

Positive relationships and social connections

Three things to know

* During adolescence, young people learn how to form safe and healthy relationships with friends, parents, teachers, and romantic partners. Research has identified that teenage relationship abuse is associated with a range of adverse outcomes for young people, including mental health, depression and suicide.

* Research shows that positive social connections with people at all stages in life helps ensure healthy development, physically, socially, and emotionally. As children transition to adolescence and start to spend less time with parents and siblings, friendships with peers become an increasingly important source of these social connections. Strong relationships and positive friendships can help encourage healthy habits.

* Studies have shown that developing and maintaining a positive and strong parent-adolescent relationship has real consequences. Positive parent-child relationships are associated with higher levels of adolescent self-esteem, happiness, and life satisfaction, and lower levels of emotional and physical distress.

Three things to do if your child is at Key Stage 3 or 4

* Help provide opportunities for your child to develop social skills through building relationships with others in different settings. This could be by encouraging them to see their friends, join a youth group, and take part in hobbies with others or local sports. Social connections and experiences can help your child discover who they are, improve their happiness and develop coping skills.

* Talk to your child about different kinds of relationships, resolving conflicts, maintaining friendships and what healthy, positive relationships consist of such as:

- Mutual respect
- Being yourself
- Trusting each other
- Having different opinions and knowing that is fine
- Not feeling pressured into doing things they don't want to do

Have a look at the Relate website for all kinds of relationship advice to help you support your child in the best possible way: www.relate.org.uk

* Your relationship with your child is equally, if not more, important than any other as it will last well into adulthood. Some degree of conflict is normal but your child will still rely on you for emotional support, to set boundaries and to be a role model. Make sure you spend quality time with your child, have fun and laugh with them, talk to them, encourage them and be there if they need help.

