

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS AND TEENAGERS

in Midlothian

TOP TIPS on how to
talk to your teen

**“How can I feel
more in control as
a parent/carer?”**

Offering you help and advice

Finding ways to be
heard & to listen

Tips to help you
parent teenagers and
remain sane!



Midlothian



HELLO!

Being a parent is helping your child navigate through an increasingly complex world and giving them the tools to learn from these experiences. We as parents or carers, go from the early years where we are their world and are able to influence actions and decisions, through to the teenage years where young people can begin challenging everything and everyone around them. This is a normal part of growing up in any family but it can be difficult for parents and carers and other family members, when communication within the family appears to have broken down.

Dr Mary Smith, Director of Education, Communities and Economy, Midlothian Council'

This booklet tries to give you some help and advice that might come in handy when dealing with the challenges of being a parent or carer of a teenager.

The Booklet looks at various Topics such as:

- **What's happening to your teen**
- **Talking and listening**
- **Listening and learning**
- **Setting boundaries, limits and consequences**
- **What teenagers are looking for**
- **Feelings**

Above all, our advice to you going through a challenging time with a teenager is to try to keep communication open and if you need advice or support there are other organisations listed in the booklet who you can contact.



Begin talking early to your kids

Begin early:

- Babies learn from the moment they are born – spend time talking to them
- It's never too late to start teaching your children

Simply – love your child:

- Be affectionate
- Tell them good things about themselves and others
- They will feel more secure and learn how to treat others in positive way

Don't use violence:

- Teaching children what is right and wrong is important but should never include violence
- Don't humiliate or embarrass your child
- Teach them that good behaviour is always rewarding

(Source:www.actiononviolence.com)

What's happening to your teen



Finding out more about adolescence can help parents better understand and cope with the changes that their young person undergoes.

By becoming familiar with these stages, we will increase our competence in encouraging teens to establish their sense of identity.

- Teens are preparing to separate and/or individuate from the family and are in the process of developing their values.
- Teenagers need to initiate this separation and rebellion can give them the energy to do this. They challenge rules and values as a way of establishing their individuality and do this usually through conflict and confrontation.
- Adolescents may be rude or make fun of parents and other authority figures; in a teenager's mind, this defiance expresses their autonomy and often serves as a test of parental caring.
- Due to body changes, there can be confusion about whether teenagers really do want to grow up.
- Hormonal changes cause mood swings marked by tearfulness, heightened sensitivity, sudden flare-ups, an increased need for physical activity and inappropriate laughter and giggling.
- Teens begin to work out their relationships with their peers to find out how they fit in.

- Teenagers have a heightened need for privacy that also gives them a new sense of control and autonomy. They need this privacy to test things out for themselves without parent input.
- Teenagers may feel all powerful and all knowing at the same time that they experience fears of inadequacy and failure.
- Teens still need an adult to relate to, but in a different way than they did when they were younger.



(Source: International Network for Children & Families)

“Being a teenager is hard”



Win a family cinema pass!

Please send us your feedback on how information in this booklet has helped you for the chance of winning a family cinema ticket by the 31st of January 2018.

Email: asb@midlothian.gcsx.gov.uk with the word “TALK” in the subject line.

Talking and Listening



There are times when all of us find it difficult to talk to others.

We can all find it difficult to get others to listen. Where there is a big age difference, it can be even harder to have our say and to be understood.

These snippets of conversation reveal what sorts of things can be going on in the minds of young people and parents.

Young people

"I wish my Mum and Dad would listen to me and not keep having arguments with me and blaming me for everything"

"No-one seems to understand my feelings. They think I am a kid and have no worries. They are wrong"

"I wish people talked to me and understood me instead of pretending they understood"

"I wish my mum would listen to me carefully instead of butting in and giving me a lecture"

"No-one seems to take me seriously"

"I wish I could trust people not to laugh at me or look at my problems as insignificant"

"Being a teenager is hard. It is hard to always do what your parents would want you to do. It feels as if everyone is always putting pressure on you and are taking control of your life. I don't like this. You have to try things out for yourself. I don't think it is fair to rule other people's lives."

Parents

"I just don't understand her anymore"

"Everytime I try to find out what she's up to, it ends up in her shouting at me to mind my own business and stop interfering. Then the door is slammed, out she goes and I don't know where she's gone or when she'll be back. Then I get dead anxious – and angry. I keep asking myself where I'm going wrong and then I feel guilty"

"We've grown apart and I wish we hadn't"

"I just feel that he expects me to be at his beck and call. I'm there to fork out money, wash his jeans and not ask any questions. I know he feels that I don't understand him, but how can I when he won't talk to me?"

"We're stuck in a rut. It feels like every day we have a fight about something and hurl accusations at each other. I get accused of not understanding her but I don't think that she realises that I feel misunderstood too. It's not that I want to interfere, I just want to make sure she doesn't get into any trouble"

"She says that I'm on her back and that I nag her the whole time. I know I sound like a broken record but how else can I get her to clean her room? She doesn't seem to care how I feel"

"I wish they would talk quietly instead of yelling"

Does this sound familiar?

How can things be improved? Read on...

TOP TIPS on how to talk to your teen

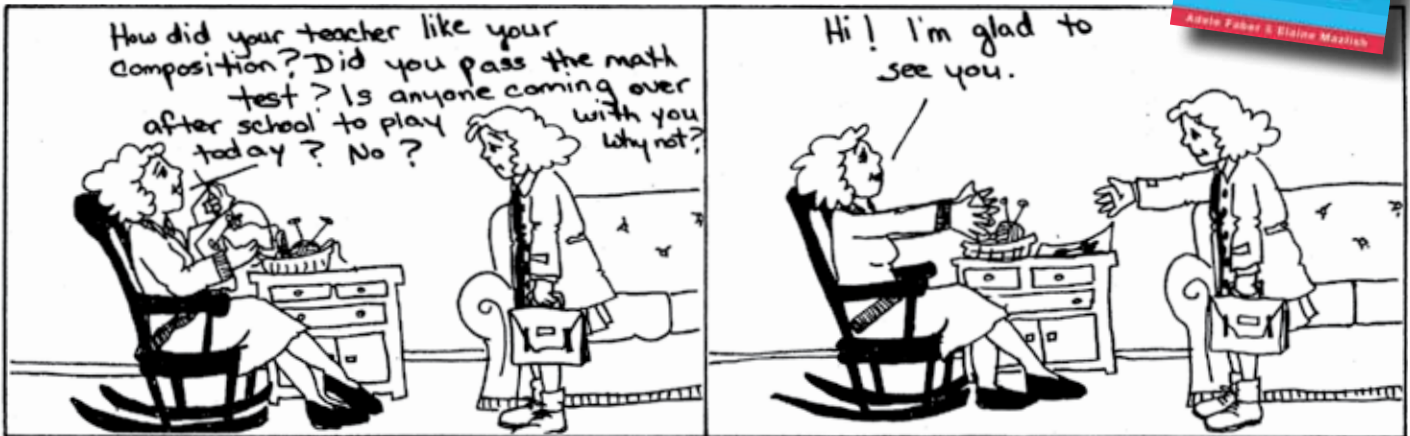
Scenario: 1

The following scenarios are extracts from the book "How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk", by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish.



DON'T ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS

Instead of



Instead of



Too many questions can be experienced as an invasion of one's private life. Children will talk about what they want to talk about when they want to talk about it.

Scenario: 2

SHOW RESPECT FOR A CHILD'S STRUGGLE

Instead of

Show respect



Instead of

Show respect



Instead of

Show respect



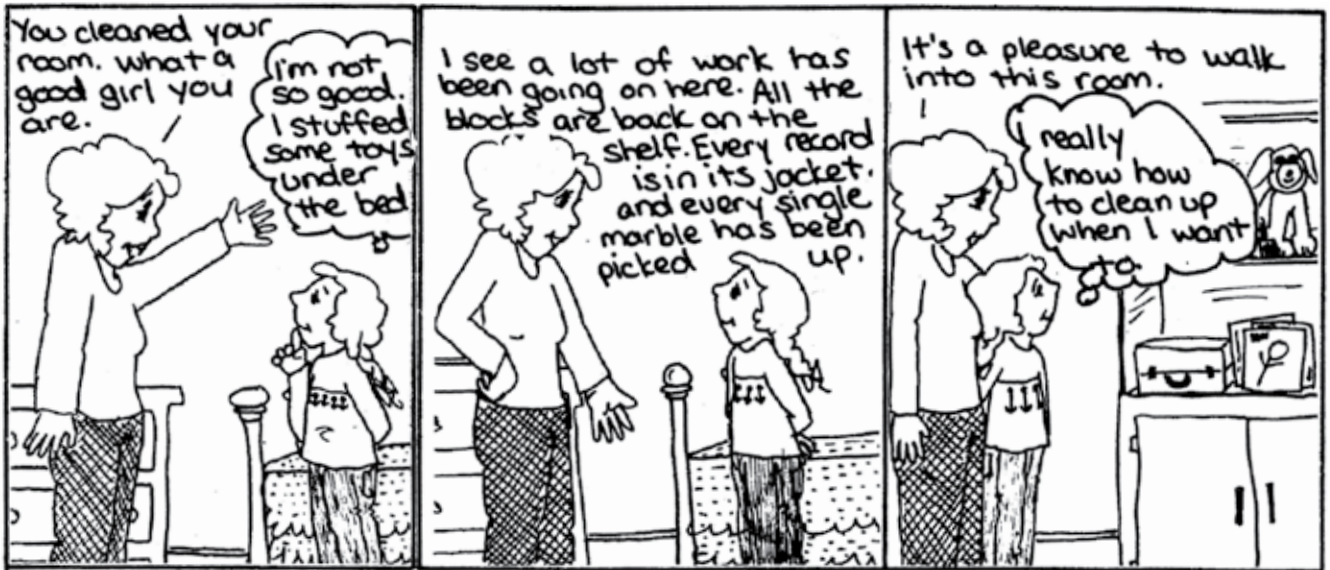
When a child's struggle is respected, he gathers courage to see a job through by himself.

Scenario: 3

DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE

Instead of evaluating

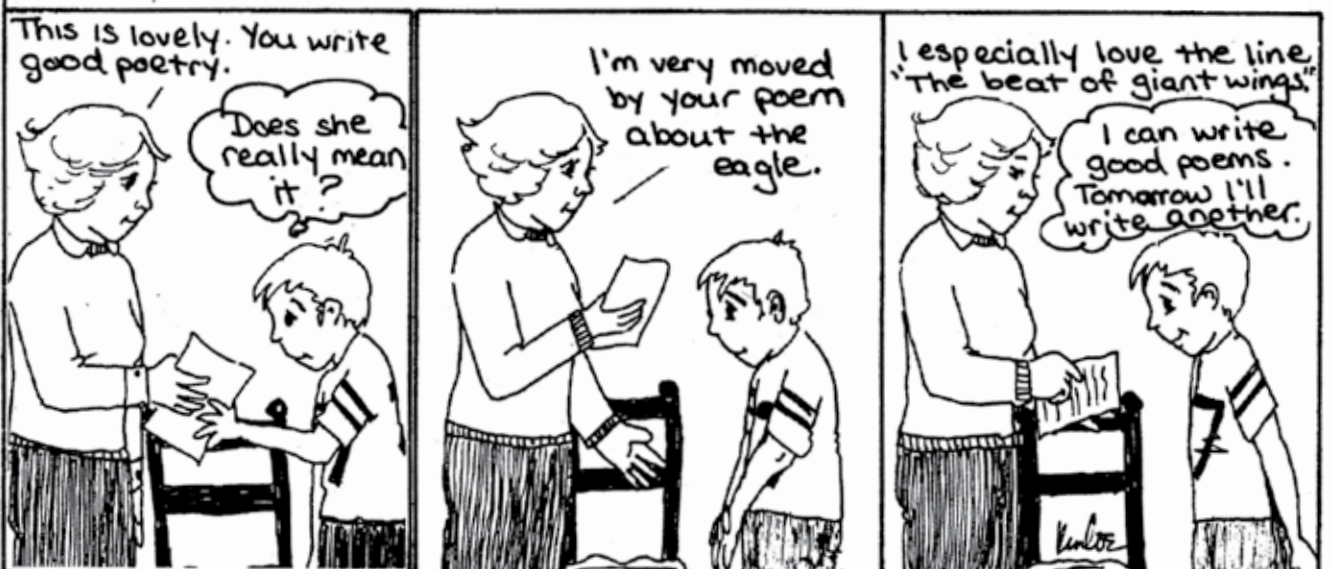
Describe what you see or feel



Describe



Describe

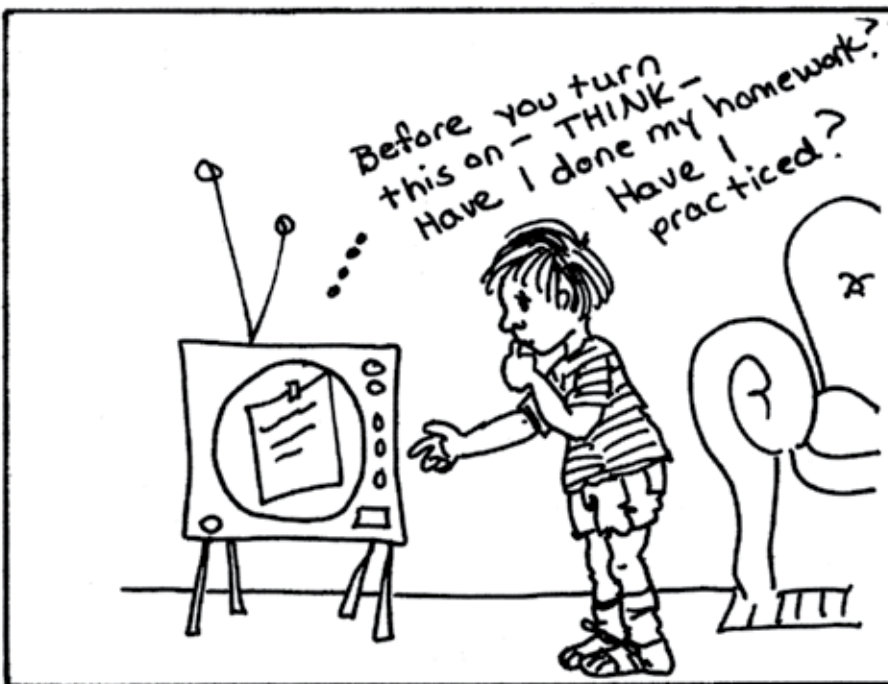


Scenario: 4

WRITE A NOTE



Sometimes nothing we say is as effective as the written word. The note below was written by a father who was tired of cleaning his daughter's long hairs from the sink drain.



This was written by a working mother who taped it to the family TV set.

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Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk* (Piccadilly Press, an imprint of Bonnier Zaffre, 2013) 978 1848123090 pages 66, 144, 145, 181

In

Talking to your kids and teenagers in Midlothian


a booklet produced by Midlothian Community Safety and Justice Partnership.

OVER 5 MILLION COPIES SOLD

HOW TO TALK

SO KIDS WILL LISTEN AND LISTEN SO KIDS WILL TALK

Adele Faber & Elaine M



“I was sceptical initially but could see the results after persisting. The book makes you feel a little more confident” – mum Jola

“Although I thought that I had a good way in approach to my child, I became more aware of how to look at things from the child’s perception. It was like working in partnership with the child.” – mum Gemma

“Both me and my husband are more positive and are in a completely different place than when we were 3 years ago and that is really down to the book.” – parents of three children age 8,9 and 12

“Absolutely - all parents should attend the class and be given the book” – mum Julie

“Due to the change in my approach the kids are more on board. Even the change in my tone when dealing with situations provokes a more positive reaction, especially with the older kids.” – mum Alana

“Using advice from the book I managed to bring peace between my own mum and my son. My mum had a habit of teasing my son who would then react by having a tantrum, she really only did this to get a reaction out of him. I spoke to both my son and my mum and said that this wouldn’t be happening in the future as it was upsetting for him. Granny was surprised...” – mum Shona

Listening & Learning



Changing the way we talk to each other is hard work.

It is a skill and like any skill, it is a matter of trial and error. Here are some things, which work a lot of the time for a great many people. However, we are all very different and we know our own family best. Also, different things work at different times. In general, there are two golden rules of successful communication.

- Both people have to be heard
- Both people have to listen

Finding ways to be heard

Getting it right

- ✓ **Choosing a good time**, when neither of you will feel rushed – you may have to wait. It can be a good idea to ask the other person whether she/he has time to listen to you – if not, find out when a good time would be.
- ✓ **Choosing a good place** where neither of you will be distracted. Ideally you want to see each other face to face. A rule of thumb is don't get louder, get nearer.

Getting it wrong

- ✗ **Not taking account of the other person.** Others are unlikely to listen when they are tired, hungry, busy or have something else on their minds, nor if there are a lot of people about.
- ✗ **Getting loud.** If you need to shout, you've lost your cool, you're too far away or there are too many distractions.

Finding ways to listen

Getting it right

- ✓ **Making eye contact.** When you look at your young person, he/she knows you are really listening.
- ✓ **Letting your young person have their say.**

Getting it wrong

- ✗ **Showing disapproval.** Don't frown or shake your head, this suggests to your young person that you are not prepared to hear their point of view.
- ✗ **Criticising what your young person is saying.**





7 DEADLY HABITS

OF COMMUNICATION

Following these tips may not be easy as communicating with your young person in the past may have been difficult. However it is important for you to:

- Find ways to communicate your point of view which will encourage your teenager to listen
- Be prepared to compromise
- Show that you value your young person even though you do not agree with him/her
- Stay in the present and don't dredge up the past

If teenagers don't have a positive relationship with their parents or another adult and feel they cannot discuss things that are bothering them, their peers will have a much greater influence on them.

“Teenagers need their parent’s involvement”

- 1 BLAMING
- 2 COMPLAINING
- 3 BRIBING
- 4 CRITICISING
- 5 NAGGING
- 6 PUNISHING
- 7 THREATENING

7 EFFECTIVE HABITS

OF COMMUNICATION

Making space for teenage time



Teenagers communicate in unexpected moments when they feel it is safe to do so. If you want to keep a good relationship going with your young person, you need to be able to be open, responsive and respectful of his or her decision-making abilities, even though you may not agree with everything.

- 1 LISTENING
- 2 SUPPORTING
- 3 ENCOURAGING
- 4 RESPECTING
- 5 TRUSTING
- 6 ACCEPTING
- 7 NEGOTIATING



“How can I help my teenager?”

Sometimes the biggest problems have the simplest solutions. Just by talking the problem through with another parent or teacher or by calling one of the helplines listed at the end of this leaflet, may be enough to help sort things out in your own mind.

You could also encourage your young person to talk to someone he/she trusts outwith the family or they may find it more helpful to contact one or more of the confidential helplines available to young people, some of which are listed at the end of this leaflet.

Try to find out from your teenager whether there are reasons for their behaviour, other than the developmental changes they are going through. It may be they are being bullied or worrying about something specific. Most adolescents will just reply to such questions with a oneword answer such as “dunno”, but they may actually open up and be able to tell you what is wrong.



“How can I feel more in control as a parent?”

Teenagers are like toddlers, in that they will try to push the rules to see how far they will bend and how much they can get away with. This can drive parents/carers mad, but it does serve a purpose. Teenagers need to find out what the sensible limits are as they become young adults.

It may be that you have slipped into a pattern whereby your teenager is calling all the shots and you may now need to reset the boundaries. Boundaries that are too restrictive can also cause a problem; because teenagers need to practise being adults, the more you ban things, the more attractive they will appear. There are a number of helpful ‘survival guides’ for parents of teenagers

– details are listed at the end of this leaflet.

“I’ve tried but

Every parent has moments when they feel like a failure and sometimes we all need some outside help. Don’t be afraid to ask and don’t feel ashamed.

You’ll be surprised to discover how many parents feel just like you do.

Try to find out if there is a local parents support group you could attend; the local community centre, GP surgery or social services may have details.

Tips to help you parent teenagers

and remain sane!

- Care enough to set limits and establish rules – make sure these are reasonable and few in numbers.
- ‘Negotiate’ with your teens. Let them state what they want; you state what you want and then try to reach a negotiated compromise.
- Treat your teenager like you would an adult, but don’t always expect adult behaviour from them.
- Don’t preach at them. Adolescents hate preaching by their parents and will blank you when you do.
- Practise the three R’s of effective parenting – LISTEN – LISTEN – LISTEN.
- When you are wrong, say you’re sorry. When you do, you are teaching them an invaluable lesson in human relationships.
- Laugh with your teenager. Laughter has been called “social glue” because it bonds us to those we laugh with.
- Never use sarcasm, ridicule or put-down in your relationship with your adolescent. Teenagers hate this kind of destructive communication.
- Don’t yell or scream, this will only produce a similar reaction.
- Say “NO” without guilt. Saying “No” to your teens does not mean that you do not love them. Just the opposite. We should love them enough to say “No”.

(Source: www.joanbramsch.com)

Rules, limits & consequences

As children grow older and move into the teenage years parents do have to alter their behaviour. Parents need to change the way they deal with things like rules and consequences.

Remember that teenagers need:

- To have clear limits
- To have rules clearly explained to them
- To have a say in the rules that affect them
- To be helped to understand what the consequences will be if the rules are broken

The most important thing is for parents to come to decisions jointly with their teenager. Setting limits will be much more effective if it involves compromise and negotiation.

This will be easier if parents:

- Explain the rules they impose
- Concentrate on the important issues, not the petty ones
- Stress that they care about their teenager
- Find ways to be flexible and respond to circumstances
- Give the teenager increased responsibility

Where the limits are challenged or the rules broken, parents need to have a sensible list of options up their sleeve. First, it is not necessary to punish a teenager the first time things go wrong. In fact this is bound to happen and a reasonable parent will accept this. If rules are continually broken however, keep in mind the following:

- Only use consequences that will stick
- Only use consequences that mean something to the young person
- Don’t threaten what you cannot carry through
- Be restrained – don’t overplay your hand
- Reasoning and discussion are always better than consequence
- Rewarding positive behaviour is far more effective than punishing bad behaviour
- Look for the good in your teenager – do not always concentrate on the bad.

*Adapted by Diane Littlejohn, Parenting Development Worker
Aberlour National Parenting Development Project*

nothing works”

You may be relieved to find that you are not alone in experiencing difficulties with your young person.

If you are concerned that your young person is misusing drugs or alcohol, developing an eating disorder, harming himself/herself or is seriously unhappy/depressed, there are specialist sources of practical help, some of which are detailed at the end of this leaflet.



Aim High

Aim High – Lifelong learning and employability is part of the Education Service in Midlothian. They support young people, adults and families to improve their life chances through the development of skills and that includes effective parenting skills.

There are programmes for parents and carers including courses that will help you gain confidence in dealing with children and teenagers. There is also a tailor-made programme for young parents under the age of 25.

Courses are to give practical, effective methods of communication that will make relationships between parents/carers and their children less stressful and more rewarding.

For information on courses: **“Raising Children with Confidence”** and **“Raising Teens with Confidence”** please contact: lle@midlothian.gov.uk, 0131 271 4535 or 3713.

Parenting in Midlothian

(www.parentinginmidlothian.co.uk) said: Being a parent/ carer is one of the most important and rewarding roles one ever undertakes but often it is one there is the least preparation for. As a parent/ carer we are our children’s first and most effective teacher, the most influential early role model and are the most significant influence on our children’s early social, emotional and academic development.

Parenting Midlothian run courses for parents that are designed to promote positive parenting strategies and to assist parents in managing behaviour.

The Incredible Years Course

The programme consists of 10-12 two hour sessions.

The internationally renowned trouble-shooting programme for parents of pre-school and primary school aged children.

Testimonial: “How important is active listening! I learned about empathy and allowing young people to understand and explore feelings.”

Raising Children with Confidence Course

Promoting Emotional Health & Well-being

RCWC is an affirming course for parents/children with children age 0-12, which pulls together many of the latest findings and evidence from research to explain what influences children’s emotional well-being and why what we do makes such a difference.

Testimonial: “The key learning for me is the impact of positive relationships on children and the importance of attachments.”

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen Course

Learn skills that make life with children easier and more satisfying.

The goal of How To Talk workshop is to give you practical, effective methods of communication that will make your relationship with children less stressful and more rewarding.

Learn how to:

- **Discipline without hurting**
- **Cope with a child’s negative feelings**
- **To engage a child’s willing co-operation**
- **To help a child develop a realistic and positive self image**
- **To foster an atmosphere of love and respect**
- **To resolve conflicts peacefully**

Best thing about the course?

“ The content of the course was very relevant. It was good to have the clips to watch as you could relate a bit more. It was also good to see the right and wrong responses.”

“ Learning to understand my children more”

“ Everything is about my child and not me”

“ Realising the small changes needed to improve my communication skills and listening skills”

“ Being able to share ideas and know you are not the only one!”

One example of a skill you found especially helpful?

“Knowing how to express negative feelings without attacking the child’s character”

“Not saying “Naughty boy!””

“Acknowledging a child’s feelings”

“How to free a child from being typecast in a role”

“How to praise by describing what you see or what you feel”

“How to acknowledge a child’s feelings more and how to praise appropriately”

“I now allow my child to have negative feelings and don’t dismiss them”

If you are interested in the courses, please visit our website www.parentinginmidlothian.co.uk to book a place or contact the Parenting Lead – Midlothian Council, Fairfield House, Dalkeith, EH22 3ZG, Tel: **0131 271 3744**

We will contact you ASAP to confirm if there are spaces in your area.



A Resolution Service for young people and families

Midlothian Council offers this service to families and young people. The resolution of disputes within families prevents homelessness, improves attendance at school, and helps find the pathway to a positive destination for our young people when they leave school. We work with schools to find practical solutions, tailor-made for each young person. Those who have worked with the resolution service are no longer involved in criminal activities.

We can help:

- During relationship breakdown
- When parents or a young person identify difficulties with changes at home or where practical arrangements need to be resolved.
- Where a young person becomes homeless, we can help re-establish contact or residence, repair communication with family members and bring in other support to keep the family unit intact.
- Where a young person feels is not being listened to or understood we help to present the young person's point of view.



Organisations, websites & useful publications

Organisation & websites

PARENTLINE SCOTLAND

Provides a free 24 hour helpline for parents and carers of children in Scotland to call about any problem or concern in confidence

Helpline: 0808 800 2222

www.children1st.org.uk

TSA

Produces information and publications for parents, practitioners and young people

Tel: 01273 693311

www.tsa.uk.com

FATHERS DIRECT

For all dads, fathers-to-be to more experienced dads

www.fathersdirect.com

BBC PARENTING

A wide range of information and advice for parents

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting

BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC PARENTS

Information and advice

www.blackparentnetwork.com

DISABLED PARENTS NETWORK

Information and support for parents and disabilities

www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

MELD

Provide a free confidential service for anyone whose life is affected by drug use including family support groups

Tel: 0131 660 3566

www.meld-drugs.org.uk

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DRUG & ALCOHOL PROJECT

Provides advice, support, guidance and practical assistance with everyday tasks

Tel: 01875 824090

YOUNG MINDS

Information and advice in relation to the mental health of children and young people

www.youngminds.org.uk

Midlothian Resolution Service

0131 271 3617

Email: mediation@midlothian.gov.uk

Useful publications

GET OUT OF MY LIFE, BUT FIRST TAKE ME AND ALEX INTO TOWN

by Tony Wolf and Suzanne Franks Profile Books, 2002 – This is a survival guide for parents covering all the difficult issues of bringing up teenagers, such as school, sex and drugs. It also looks at conflict, communication and why teenagers behave the way they do.

THE TERRIBLE TEENS: WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW

by Kate Figs Viking, 2002 – This book covers mood swings, how teenagers think, reducing conflict, family living, the importance of friendships, life at school, sexuality, alcohol and drugs.

PARENTING TEENAGERS, by Bob Myers Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1996 – This book explains how to make, maintain, repair and strengthen relationships with teenagers.

Acknowledgement to Diane Littlejohn, Parenting Development Worker Aberlour National Parenting Development Project, Chris Henderson Parenting Lead – Early Years Team, Patricia Di-duca – Home Link Teacher, Jenny Jacobs Positive Parenting Worker, Dr Mary Smith Director of Education, Communities and Economy, Helen Graham and Stuart Burnett – East and Midlothian Resolution Service, Talk Listen Resolve, Magdalena Clark Community Safety Development Officer, Midlothian Libraries. Further information can be found at <http://www.fabermazlish.com>

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