Parent Support Guide

Help Your Teen Explore Their Future Without Pressure

Life After School - Finding Your Feet

A practical guide to support, motivate and encourage your teen as they prepare for life after school



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Welcome Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

If your teen is preparing to leave school and you're feeling a mix of hope, worry, excitement and "please just tell me they're going to be okay"...
you are not alone.

This season can feel big for the whole family.

Your teen may be facing questions about university, TAFE, apprenticeships, work, gap years, ATAR results, friendships, independence and their future identity.

And as a parent, you may be wondering:

- How do I support them without pushing too hard?
- How do I motivate them without making them feel pressured?
- How do I help them take action when they don't know what they want yet?
- How do I stay calm when I'm secretly worried too?

This guide was created to help you support your teen with warmth, confidence and practical direction.

Because teens do not always need someone to tell them exactly what to do.

Sometimes they need someone to help them feel safe enough to explore, brave enough to take action, and supported enough to believe they can work it out.

Your role is not to have all the answers for them.

Your role is to help them **ask better questions, notice their strengths, explore their options**, and take their next brave step.

With support,

Judy Nieuwenhuizen

Kids & Teen Life & Mindset Coach



WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS GUIDE

- Practical tools and conversation tips to support your teen
- Ideas to help your teen explore their options with clarity and confidence
- Simple strategies to build motivation and take small action steps
- Ways to reduce pressure and strengthen your connection
- Encouragement for you as you navigate this season together

You don't have to have all the answers. You just have to be the calm, supportive person who walks beside your teen as they discover their path.

Helping parents guide teens toward confidence, clarity and action — *without adding pressure.*

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The Big Shift After School

It's not just an academic transition.
It's an emotional one.

Your teen is moving from a world that has been structured for them into a world where they are expected to make bigger decisions, manage more responsibility and begin shaping their future.

That can feel exciting.
It can also feel overwhelming.



Some teens look confident on the outside but feel unsure underneath. Some avoid talking about the future because it feels too big. Some seem unmotivated, but underneath they may be scared of choosing wrong. Others may have a plan, but worry what will happen if that plan changes.

Before you try to motivate your teen, it helps to understand what may be happening underneath.

THEY MAY BE THINKING:

- What if I choose the wrong course?
- What if I disappoint my parents?
- What if I don't get the results I need?
- What if everyone else knows what they're doing and I don't?
- What if I start something and hate it?
- What if I fail?

When parents understand this, the conversation changes.

Instead of seeing avoidance as laziness, you may start to see it as fear.

Instead of seeing indecision as not caring, you may see it as overwhelm.

Instead of pushing harder, you can support smarter.

Your teen doesn't need someone to have all the answers.

They need someone who helps them feel safe enough to explore, brave enough to take action, and supported enough to believe they can work it out.

Remember:

This is not just your teen's journey.
It's a season you are walking together.

You don't have to do it perfectly.
You just have to keep showing up.

You are your teen's greatest source of *support, belief and encouragement.*

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The Parent Mindset Shift

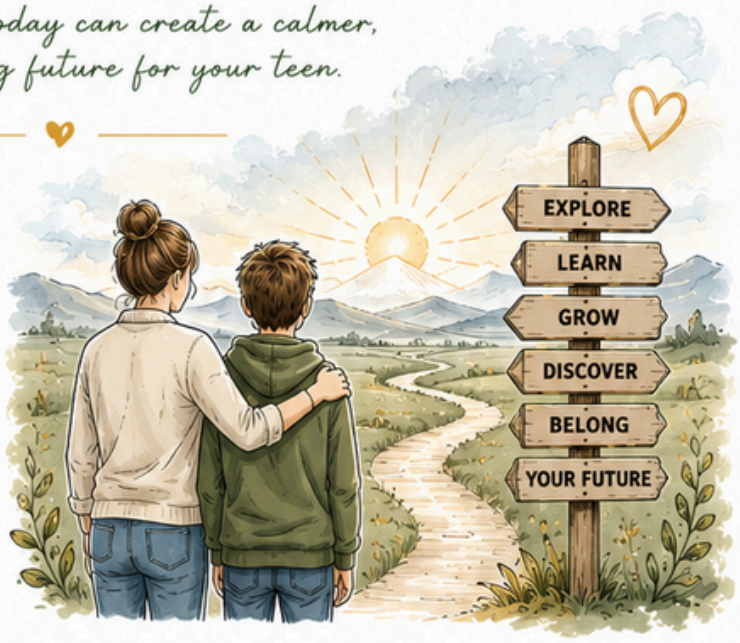
Small questions today can create a calmer, more empowering future for your teen.

One of the most powerful shifts you can make as a parent is this:

Don't ask,
"What are you doing with your whole life?"

Ask:

"What is one direction you're curious about exploring?"



This takes the pressure down.

Teens often freeze because they think one decision will lock them into their entire future.

But most adults know that life is rarely one straight road.

- People change courses.
- People change jobs.
- People discover new strengths.
- People take detours.
- People grow into opportunities they could never have predicted at seventeen.

Your teen is not choosing their whole life.
They are learning how to make their next informed step.

That is a much calmer and more empowering conversation.

SHIFTS THAT HELP YOUR TEEN GROW

From pressure and fear	→	To curiosity and confidence
From "I must get it right"	→	To "I can try and learn"
From focusing on others	→	To focusing on their own path
From all-or-nothing thinking	→	To one step at a time
From worry about the future	→	To creating their own future

You are not raising someone who needs to have it all figured out.
You are raising someone who is learning how to figure it out.

PARENT TIP

Let go of the idea that you need to have all the answers for your teen.
Your calm belief in them is more powerful than your plan for them.

Try saying this:
"You don't have to know everything today. Let's explore, learn and figure it out together."

The goal is not a perfect plan.
The goal is a confident next step.
You've got this.

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Pressure vs Support

There is a big difference between pressure and support.

The way we speak to our teens can lift their confidence – or quietly increase their stress.

Pressure may get short-term results, but support builds long-term resilience.

Let's choose words that open doors, not close them.



PRESSURE SAYS:

- "You should know by now."
- "You need to make the right choice."
- "You can't waste time."
- "Everyone else has a plan."
- "This is your future, so don't mess it up."

SUPPORT SAYS:

- "You don't have to have it all figured out today."
- "Let's explore your options together."
- "There is more than one pathway forward."
- "You can take one step at a time."
- "I believe you can work this out."

Support does not mean letting your teen do nothing.

Support means helping them move forward without making fear heavier.

The goal is not to remove all responsibility from your teen.

The goal is to help them feel capable enough to take responsibility.

That is where motivation becomes healthier.

PARENT TIP

→ When you respond with curiosity and calm, your teen feels safer to open up, think clearly and take action.

> *We can't always control what our teens feel, but we can control the environment we create for their growth.*

Support builds trust.
Trust builds courage. Courage builds action.

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What Not to Say — and What to Say Instead

Sometimes parents say things with good intentions, but teens hear pressure.

Here are some gentle swaps that keep the conversation open, supportive and encouraging.



INSTEAD OF SAYING:
"You need to figure this out."

TRY SAYING:
"Let's look at some options together and start with one small step."

INSTEAD OF SAYING:
"You can't just do nothing."

TRY SAYING:
"I know this feels big. What's one action we can take this week?"

INSTEAD OF SAYING:
"Everyone else seems to know what they're doing."

TRY SAYING:
"Everyone's path is different. Let's focus on what feels right for you."

INSTEAD OF SAYING:
"That's not a real career."

TRY SAYING:
"Tell me what interests you about that. Let's research where it could lead."

INSTEAD OF SAYING:
"You're wasting time."

TRY SAYING:
"Exploring is useful, but let's make sure we're exploring with action."

Support exploration, but encourage movement. That's the balance.

When we choose our words carefully, we help our teens feel supported instead of judged, curious instead of pressured, and capable instead of overwhelmed.

PARENT TIP

Your tone matters as much as your words.
Gentle, calm conversations create safety.
Safety creates openness.
Openness creates action.

ASK YOURSELF

- What do I want my teen to feel when we talk?
- What kind of conversations help them open up?
- How can I be their safe person to talk with?

The right words at the right time can make all the difference.

Small shifts. Big impact.

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The Balanced Parent Approach

A teen needs both emotional safety and gentle accountability.
Too much pressure can make them shut down.
Too little structure can leave them stuck.



The sweet spot is:

Warmth + Action

You can say:

"I understand this feels overwhelming, and I'm here with you."

Then add:

"Let's choose one small step to take this week."

That combination helps your teen feel both supported and guided.

Try using this phrase:

"No pressure to have the whole plan, but let's not stay frozen."

It removes shame while still encouraging action.

KEEP BOTH HEART AND DIRECTION

Lead with warmth
Let your teen know they are loved, safe and not alone.

Add gentle accountability
Encourage action with small, realistic steps.

Focus on progress, not perfection
Celebrate effort and learning, not just outcomes.

Stay consistent
Small, steady conversations over time create lasting impact.

Remember

Your teen doesn't need a perfect parent.
They need a present one.
Someone who believes in them, guides them, and walks beside them.

PARENT TIP

You don't need to have all the answers.
You just need to be willing to explore and learn alongside your teen.

A GENTLE REMINDER

Connection is the foundation.
Action is the next step.
Together, they create confidence.

Warmth opens hearts.
Action builds futures.
Balance creates growth.

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Balanced Parent Approach

It's not about being perfect.
It's about being present and intentional.

Balance creates connection. Connection creates change.

Teens need both connection AND guidance.
Too much of one,
or too much of the other,
can cause disconnection.

Balance helps your teen feel safe and supported while learning to grow.



THE BALANCE IN ACTION

	Connection I connect by...	Guidance I guide by...
Communication	Listening with curiosity and care.	Sharing my thoughts calmly and clearly.
Boundaries	Respecting their feelings and perspective.	Setting limits with kindness and consistency.
Independence	Encouraging their choices and autonomy.	Helping them think through consequences.
Support	Being there without trying to fix.	Offering tools and resources when they need them.
Expectations	Believing in their potential.	Encouraging growth with realistic expectations.

SIGNS OF BALANCE

Your teen feels:

- Safe to share
- Trusted
- Supported
- Encouraged to try
- Guided, not controlled

You feel:

- More connected
- Less power struggle
- Clearer on how to respond
- Confident in your role
- Proud of the relationship you're building



Balance isn't 50/50 every day.
Some days you'll lean more into connection.
Other days, more into guidance.
That's okay. Keep coming back to balance.



DAILY BALANCE CHECK-IN

Ask yourself each day:

- Did I connect with my teen today?
- Did I provide the guidance they need?
- Did I do both with respect and kindness?

Small, consistent efforts create lasting connections.

PARENT TIP

Balance looks different for every family and every teen.
Trust yourself, stay flexible and keep learning together.
You're doing better than you think.

ASK YOURSELF

- How did I show up for my teen today?
- What worked well?
- What can I do differently tomorrow?

Balance is not a destination.
It's a daily practice.
Keep showing up. You're making a difference.

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Parent Conversation Guide

A simple roadmap for meaningful conversations that build trust and understanding.

Good conversations don't just happen. They're built.

Use this guide as a starting point. You don't need the perfect setting or the perfect words. You just need **presence** and a **willingness** to connect.



THE BIG PICTURE

Our goal isn't to control our teens.
It's **to connect with them.**
Connection opens the door.
From there, guidance is welcome.

THE CONVERSATION ROADMAP

1. CONNECT

Start with warmth and openness. Create a safe space for your teen to open up.

TRY:
"Hey, I'd love to hear how things are going for you."

2. EXPLORE

Ask open-ended questions that invite your teen to share more.

TRY:
"What's been the best part of your week?"

3. LISTEN

Listen to understand, not to fix. Show your teen you're really hearing them.

TRY:
"It sounds like that was really frustrating."

4. REFLECT

Reflect back what you hear. It shows empathy and builds deeper connection.

TRY:
"So what I'm hearing is..."

5. SUPPORT

Offer guidance or ideas only when your teen is open to hearing it.

TRY:
"Would you like to hear some ideas I've been thinking about?"

CONVERSATION DOS

- ✓ Choose a good time (not during conflict).
- ✓ Keep your tone calm and respectful.
- ✓ Use curious questions, not interrogations.
- ✓ Listen more than you speak.
- ✓ Validate feelings, even if you disagree.
- ✓ Respect their privacy.
- ✓ Thank them for sharing.

Small conversations today build stronger relationships tomorrow.

CONVERSATION DON'TS

- ✗ Don't lecture or jump in with solutions.
- ✗ Don't dismiss or downplay their feelings.
- ✗ Don't compare them to others.
- ✗ Don't use sarcasm or teasing.
- ✗ Don't bring up past mistakes.
- ✗ Don't push if they're not ready to talk.
- ✗ Don't make it all about you.



You don't need all the answers. You just need to stay in the conversation.

THE GOAL:

Help your teen feel safe, heard and supported.
When they feel that, they'll come to you —
not just with the good stuff, but the hard stuff too.



The conversations you have today shape the relationship you'll have tomorrow. Keep showing up.
You're doing better than you think.

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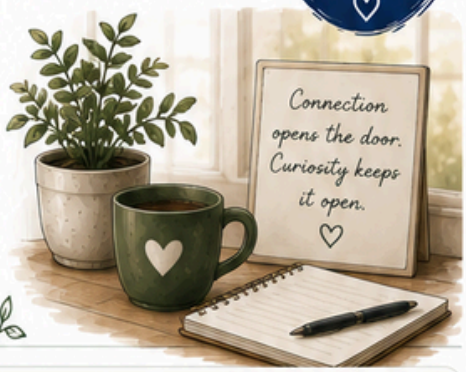
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Parent Conversation Guide

The best conversations happen in connection, not in pressure.

Use these questions when your teen is **calm, not** when they are already stressed or defensive.

Choose **one or two** at a time. Don't turn it into an interview.



Gentle Questions to Open the Conversation

1. What feels most confusing about life after school right now?
2. Is there anything you're curious about exploring, even a little bit?
3. What do you definitely know you don't want?
4. What subjects, activities or topics make you feel most interested?
5. When do you feel most like yourself?
6. What kind of workday do you think you might enjoy — busy, quiet, creative, active, practical, people-focused, outdoors, structured or flexible?
7. Would you like me to help you research options, or would you rather look first and then talk about it?
8. What feels like one small step we could take this week?

Listen more than you speak. Your teen's thoughts matter most.

- Stay curious, not corrective.
- Respect your teen's pace.
- Celebrate any step forward.

Great conversations today build a stronger tomorrow.
Keep showing up.

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Building Connection When Life Gets Busy

You don't need hours.
You need moments that matter.

Teens don't always remember what you said, but they remember how you made them feel. Connection is built in the small, everyday moments.

Let's make the most of the moments we have.



SIMPLE WAYS TO CONNECT

Car talks
Use drive time for open conversations. No eye contact needed.

Share small moments
A funny meme, a quick text, or a photo from your day.

Do life together
Cook a meal, go for a walk, or tackle a project side by side.

Create rituals
A goodnight check-in, weekend breakfast, or Sunday reset.

Show up
Be there for the moments that matter most to them.

CONNECTION STARTERS

Try these openers to invite conversation:

- What was the best part of your day?
- What's something you're looking forward to?
- What's been on your mind lately?
- What made you smile this week?
- What's something I should know about your world right now?

Then listen.
Really listen.
That's where connection grows.





Connection is like a plant.
It grows strongest with consistent care, attention and time.

Even on the busiest days, a little connection goes a long way.
Little moments. Big impact.

PARENT TIP

If your teen shuts down, don't take it personally.
It's not always about you.
Stay consistent, stay calm and keep showing up.
Trust is built over time.

WHAT THEY NEED MOST

- To feel safe
- To feel heard
- To feel like they matter
- To know you're in their corner

Connection today.
Confidence for tomorrow.
Be present. Be the person they trust.

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Handling Big Emotions with Calm and Confidence

You can be calm and still set limits.

Big emotions are normal.
How we respond makes all the difference.

Teens experience intense feelings.
When emotions run high, their thinking brain goes offline.
Your calm helps bring it back online.

Be the calm that helps them through the storm.



WHEN EMOTIONS ARE HIGH:

Pause
Take a breath before you respond.
It gives you time to choose your response, not react.

Listen
Let them express how they feel.
Feeling heard helps lower the intensity.

Validate
Acknowledge their feelings, even if you don't agree.
"I can see this is really hard for you."

Guide
Offer support and perspective when they are ready.

Follow Up
Check in later when things are calmer.
Repair and reconnect.

CALM RESPONSES THAT HELP

- I can see this is upsetting. I'm here."
- Take your time. I'll listen when you're ready."
- It's okay to feel this way. I'm not going anywhere."
- Let's figure this out together."
- We can come back to this when we're both calmer."



You don't need the perfect words.
You just need a calm presence and a willing heart.



Your calm is contagious.
It helps your teen feel safe enough to ride out the wave.

REMEMBER:

- Big feelings don't last forever.
- Reacting in anger often makes things worse.
- Responding with calm builds trust.
- Over time, your teen learns to manage emotions, too.

PARENT TIP

Regulate yourself first.
Take care of your own stress so you can show up as the calm your teen needs.

ASK YOURSELF

- What is my teen feeling right now?
- What would help them feel safe?
- How can I respond in a way I'll be proud of later?

You can't always control the storm, but you can be the calm.
Calm connects. Connection heals.

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Motivation Without Pressure

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Many parents ask, *"How do I motivate my teen?"*

The answer is not always to push harder.

Often, it is to help them **reconnect** with three things:

1 Choice

Teens are more motivated when they feel they have some ownership.

Try saying:

"You don't have to choose what I would choose. I want to help you discover what fits you."



2 Progress

Teens often avoid action because the goal feels too big.

Try saying:

"We're not solving everything today. We're just taking one step."



3 Belief

Teens need to feel that you believe they are capable, even when they are unsure.

Try saying:

"I know you may not feel clear yet, but I believe you can figure this out one step at a time."



Motivation grows when teens feel respected, capable and supported.

You don't need to push harder.
You just need to guide better.
Motivation starts with connection.

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Motivation Without Pressure

When they feel inspired, they take ownership.

Teens need encouragement, not pressure.
Our job is to inspire, not to push.

Pressure can lead to resistance.
Motivation comes from within.
We can create the conditions for that motivation to grow.

Let's focus on encouragement, curiosity and confidence.



SHIFTS THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

INSTEAD OF...	TRY THIS INSTEAD...
"Why aren't you trying harder?" Focuses on what's wrong.	"What's one thing that would make today feel more successful for you?" Focuses on what's possible.
"You should be doing more." Creates pressure and comparison.	"What matters most to you right now?" Builds alignment and ownership.
"What are your grades?" Leads with judgment.	"What are you proud of lately?" Builds confidence and self-worth.
"I've told you this a million times." Creates defensiveness.	"Want a reminder or some space?" Respects their autonomy.
"That's not good enough." Shuts down motivation.	"You're making progress. What's helping you?" Encourages and builds momentum.

Motivation grows in the right environment: encouragement, trust and belief.

- **Notice effort, not just outcomes.** Celebrate the small steps.
- **Help them see their progress.** Reflection builds momentum.
- **Give them choices.** Autonomy builds commitment.



PARENT TIP

Your belief in your teen is powerful.
Speak in a way that lifts them up,
even when they can't see their own potential.
Your confidence in them can become their motivation.

ASK YOURSELF

- Am I encouraging or pressuring?
- Do my words build confidence or doubt?
- Am I focusing on effort, growth and learning?
- How can I support their "why"?

Inspiration lights the path.
Trust and encouragement
help them walk it.
You don't have to push. Just believe.

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The Future Exploration Tool

Use this simple tool to help your teen explore their future in a low-pressure, meaningful way.

Exploration creates clarity. Clarity creates confidence.

This tool helps teens look forward with curiosity, not pressure.

You don't need all the answers.

You just need to start the conversation.



1 Notice Interests

What sparks their curiosity? What topics, activities or things do they enjoy learning about or doing, even in their free time?

Try asking:

- What do you enjoy doing that makes time fly?
- What could you learn about for hours?
- What do you find yourself reading or watching?



2 Notice Strengths

What are their natural strengths? What comes easily to them? What do others often appreciate about them?

Try asking:

- What are you good at?
- What do people often ask you for help with?
- When do you feel most confident?



3 Notice Lifestyle Fit

What kind of daily life would suit them? How do they want to feel in their work and life?

Try asking:

- Do you like structure or flexibility?
- Do you prefer working with people, independently or a mix?
- What kind of environment energises you?



4 Take One Test Step

Try something small and low-risk. Action creates information and builds confidence.

Try asking:

- What's one small thing you could try or experience?
- Who could you talk to or spend time with?
- What would be a fun experiment?



Small steps create big clarity.



"Exploration is not about deciding your whole future. It's about discovering what feels right."

KEEP IT LIGHT AND OPEN

- No rush. This is a journey, not a race.
- Listen more than you guide.
- Celebrate curiosity.
- Trust that clarity grows over time.

You don't need a perfect plan. You just need the next right step.



PARENT TIP

Curiosity builds confidence.
Ask questions. Listen deeply.
Trust your teen's process.

ASK YOURSELF

- How can I support exploration without pushing?
- What opportunities can I help create?
- How can I trust my teen more in their journey?

The future isn't something we find.
It's something we create together,
one step at a time.

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The Future Exploration Tool

Use this simple 4-step tool with your teen.

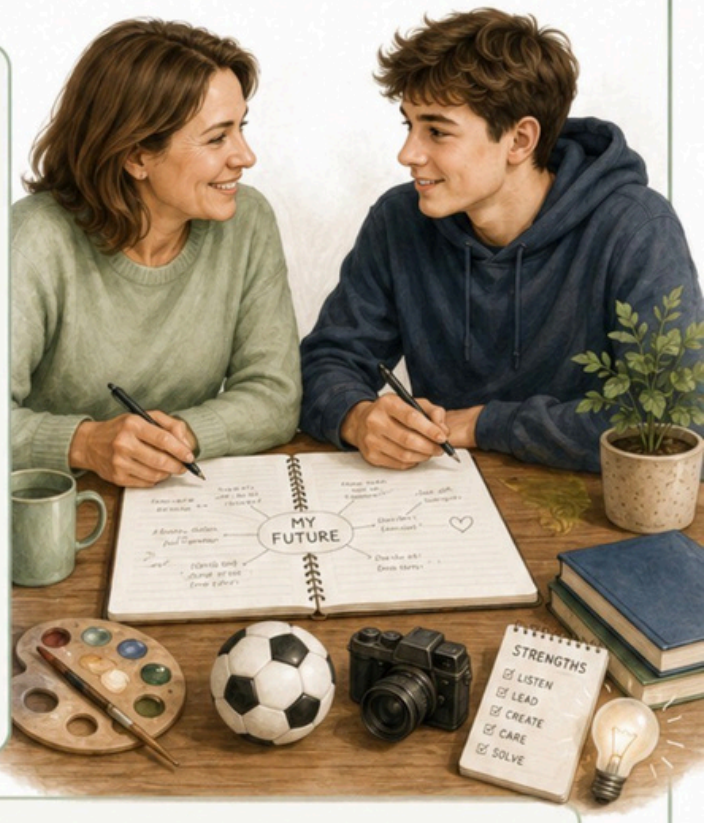
This tool helps teens gather real information instead of just worrying.

Step 1: Notice Interests

Ask:
What do you enjoy, care about or feel curious about?

Examples:

- Animals
- Sport
- Helping people
- Health
- Beauty
- Fitness
- Business
- Technology
- Children
- Design
- Building
- Food
- Writing
- Psychology
- Cars
- Outdoors
- Travel
- Teaching
- Music
- Media
- Horses
- Creative projects



Step 2: Notice Strengths

Ask: What do people come to you for?

Examples:

- Listening
- Explaining
- Organising
- Encouraging
- Solving problems
- Being creative
- Staying calm
- Leading
- Helping
- Fixing things
- Making people laugh
- Caring for others
- Being practical
- Noticing details

Start with curiosity. Clarity grows from noticing what already lights them up.

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3 Step 3: Notice Lifestyle Fit

Ask:

What kind of day would suit you?

Do they want:

People or quiet?
Do they enjoy being around people all day, or prefer time to focus alone?

Indoors or outdoors?
Do they feel energised inside, outside, or both?

Hands-on or academic?
Do they prefer practical, doing and creating, or thinking and learning?

Routine or variety?
Do they like structure and predictability, or change and new challenges?

Movement or desk work?
Do they like being active and on their feet, or working in a more seated environment?

Teamwork or independence?
Do they enjoy working with others, or prefer working on their own?

Creative tasks or practical tasks?
Do they enjoy ideas, design and expression, or solving real-world, practical problems?

> *There is no one "right" path. The right path is the one that fits your life.*



Lifestyle fit matters.
When life and work are in sync,
motivation and wellbeing grow.

The goal is not to have all the answers today.
The goal is to explore, learn and move forward with confidence.

4 Step 4: Take One Test Step

Ask:

How could we sample this before making a big decision?

They could:

Watch a day-in-the-life video
See what the work is really like.



Attend an open day
Get a feel for the environment and opportunities.



Research a course
Explore what it involves and what you could learn.



Talk to someone in the industry
Ask questions. Learn from real experiences.



Try a short course
Test the waters in a low-risk way.



Volunteer
Gain experience while helping others.



Do work experience
Spend time in a workplace and see if it fits.



Apply for a casual job
Experience the industry while earning money.



Speak to a career advisor
Get guidance tailored to their interests.



Read real job ads
See what employers are looking for.



Compare different pathways
Look at different options and where they can lead.





Small steps today
create a clearer tomorrow.

The goal is not to have all the answers today.
The goal is to explore, learn and move forward with confidence.

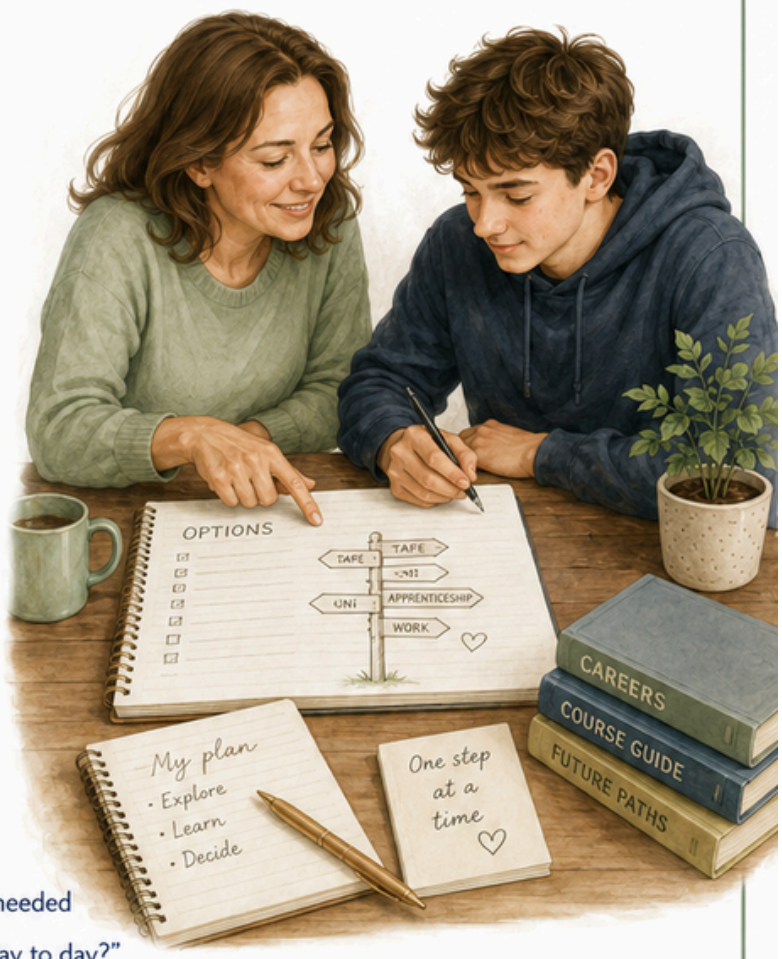
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The "Try It Before You Decide" Menu

Encourage your teen to choose one or two options from this list.

This week, I could:

- [ ] Research one course or career
- [ ] Watch three day-in-the-life videos
- [ ] Ask one adult about their job pathway
- [ ] Attend a TAFE, uni or college open day
- [ ] Make a list of possible courses
- [ ] Visit a careers website
- [ ] Email a course provider with a question
- [ ] Talk to a teacher, coach or career advisor
- [ ] Apply for one casual job
- [ ] Look into volunteering
- [ ] Ask about work experience
- [ ] Create a list of my top five interests
- [ ] Write down my top five strengths
- [ ] Compare two different pathways
- [ ] Look up entry requirements
- [ ] Find out what subjects or qualifications are needed
- [ ] Ask someone, "What is your job really like day to day?"



Parent Tip

Your teen may not feel motivated before they start.

Action often comes before motivation.

A tiny step can create momentum.

Small steps can create big momentum.

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When Your Teen Doesn't Want to Talk

Keep it light. Keep it warm. Keep it small.

Some teens avoid future conversations because they feel judged, overwhelmed or afraid of disappointing you.

Try not to force a big conversation when they are tired, emotional, distracted or defensive.



Instead, try saying:

"I'm not going to pressure you right now. I just want you to know I'm here, and we can look at options together when you're ready."

Then later, use a small invitation:

"Would you be open to spending 15 minutes this weekend looking at a few options together?"

Avoid saying:

"We need to talk about your future."

That sentence can make a teen want to disappear into a hoodie and never return.

Why this works

- Short and specific feels less overwhelming than a big heavy conversation.
- Calm timing helps your teen feel safer and more open.
- Gentle invitations build trust better than pressure.
- Small conversations are often more effective than one big talk.

Keep in mind

- Don't force the moment.
- Wait for a calmer time.
- Start small and stay warm.

Connection grows when your teen feels safe, not pressured.

Light conversations today can open bigger doors tomorrow.

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If Your Teen Seems Unmotivated

Sometimes what looks like laziness is really overwhelm, fear or uncertainty.

Lack of motivation can have many causes. Sometimes teens seem unmotivated because they are:

- Overwhelmed
- Afraid of failing
- Afraid of choosing wrong
- Burnt out from school
- Comparing themselves to others
- Unsure where to begin
- Worried they will disappoint people
- Avoiding uncomfortable emotions
- Feeling like nothing fits them



Why this matters

The first question invites honesty.

The second can trigger defensiveness.

Once you know what is underneath, you can support the real issue.

A helpful question is:

"What is making this feel hard to start?"

This is better than:

"Why aren't you doing anything?"

Keep in mind

- Curiosity helps more than criticism.
- Understanding opens the door.
- Support the feeling beneath the behaviour.

When we understand what is underneath, we can support what is really needed.

Understanding first.
Encouragement next.

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The Weekly Future Step Plan

A simple action plan parents can use with their teen.

This is a simple action plan parents can use with their teen.



This week, my teen will choose one:

- [ ] Research step
- [ ] Conversation step
- [ ] Application step
- [ ] Work experience step
- [ ] Open day step
- [ ] Volunteer step
- [ ] Course comparison step
- [ ] Strength discovery step
- [ ] Career advisor step

Celebration matters

Not in a huge way.
Just a small acknowledgement:

"I'm proud of you for taking that step."

That builds confidence.

Keep in mind

- Small steps count.
- Action builds momentum.
- Encouragement builds confidence.

Our chosen step is:

_____

_____

When will it happen?

_____

_____

What support do they need from me?

_____

_____

How will we celebrate taking the step?

_____

_____

A small step this week can build confidence for the road ahead.

Celebrate effort. Build confidence.

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Helpful Parent Phrases

Use these when your teen is unsure, stressed or disappointed.



- "You don't have to know everything today."
- "There is more than one way forward."
- "A changed plan is not a failed future."
- "Let's focus on the next step, not the whole road."
- "I believe in your ability to figure this out."
- "You are not behind. You are learning your way forward."
- "It's okay to explore before you decide."
- "You don't have to choose forever. You're choosing a next step."
- "Let's gather information before we panic."
- "I'm here to support you, not pressure you."
- "Your worth is not measured by one result, one offer or one pathway."

Why these phrases help

- They lower pressure.
- They build safety and trust.
- They help your teen feel supported.
- They encourage calmer action.

Keep in mind

- Calm words open doors.
- Reassurance builds confidence.
- Support helps teens move forward.

Helpful words today can become confidence tomorrow.

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Parent Reflection Page

Take a moment to reflect honestly.



Reflection builds awareness.

Awareness helps us support with more calm, clarity and confidence.

1. My biggest worry for my teen is:

2. One way I may accidentally add pressure is:

3. One supportive phrase I want to use more often is:

4. One action step I can help my teen take this week is:

5. One strength I see in my teen is:

6. One thing I want my teen to know is:

Small shifts in us can make a big difference for them.

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What to Say When Your Teen Feels Stuck

A quick-reference page for calm, supportive words in the moment.

Parents often don't know what to say in the moment when their teen feels stuck, overwhelmed or unsure. Simple, calm words can lower pressure and help your teen feel safe enough to take the next step.



Try saying:

1. *"You don't need the whole answer today."*
2. *"Let's just look at one option."*
3. *"What feels like the easiest first step?"*
4. *"You're not stuck forever — you're just at a starting point."*
5. *"We can figure this out together."*

Why these phrases help

- They lower pressure.
- They build safety and trust.
- They help your teen move forward.

Keep in mind

- Calm words open the door.
- Support works better than pressure.
- Small steps create momentum.

Sometimes the most powerful support is a calm sentence at the right time.

Print and keep nearby.

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Career Curiosity Questions

Gentle questions to help parents explore future options without sounding pushy.

Use these questions to gently explore ideas, strengths and possibilities with your teen. The goal is not to interrogate them. It is to spark curiosity, open conversation and help them think about what might fit them.



Try asking:

1. *"What kind of problems do you enjoy solving?"*
2. *"What topics do you naturally talk about or research?"*
3. *"What do people often say you're good at?"*
4. *"Would you rather help people, create things, fix things, lead, organise, perform, teach, build, care, design, or explore?"*
5. *"What kind of life do you want your work to support?"*

Why these questions help

- They open conversation.
- They encourage self-discovery.
- They help teens notice strengths and interests.
- They reduce pressure and increase clarity.

Keep in mind

- Stay curious, not corrective.
- Listen more than you guide.
- Let your teen think out loud.
- Exploration is part of the process.

Curiosity opens doors that pressure never can.

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BONUS PAGE 3

Parent & Teen
Future Chat Planner

Great conversations don't happen by accident.
A little planning helps create a calm, open and positive chat.

WHEN WE'LL CHAT
Choose a time when you are both calm and have little distraction.

.....

WHERE WE'LL CHAT
Pick a comfortable place where your teen feels relaxed.

.....

ONE TOPIC WE'LL EXPLORE
Keep it simple and focused. One topic at a time.

.....

ONE QUESTION I'LL ASK
Choose a gentle, curiosity-based question.

.....

ONE THING I'LL AVOID SAYING
Avoid pressure, comparison or negative comments.

.....

ONE SMALL STEP WE'LL CHOOSE
Pick one simple action your teen can take.

.....

HOW I'LL ENCOURAGE MY TEEN AFTERWARD
How will you show support and celebrate the step?

.....



Remember

It's not about having the perfect conversation.
It's about creating a safe space, asking good questions and taking small steps forward together.

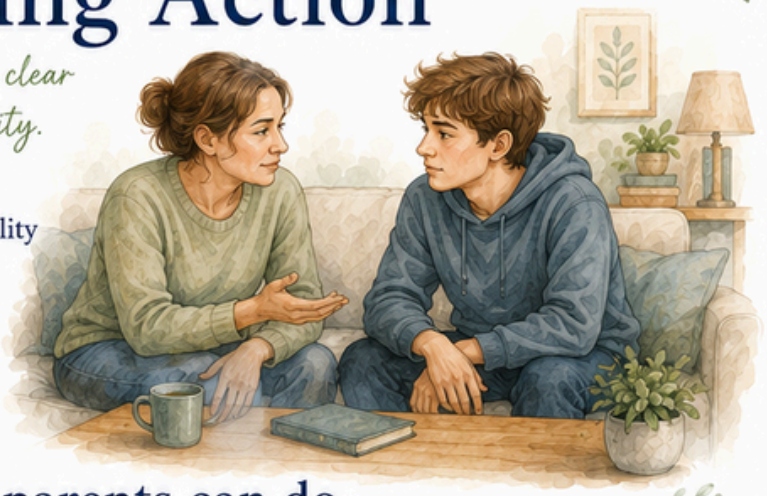
The goal is progress, not perfection.
Small conversations today can lead to big opportunities tomorrow.
You're got this!

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When Your Teen Isn't Taking Action

How to stay supportive while setting clear boundaries and building accountability.



Sometimes a teen is not just unsure — they may also be avoiding effort, responsibility or action. When this happens, support still matters, but so do clear boundaries. Your teen needs love, structure, accountability and a reason to move forward.

What parents can do

1. **Stay calm but clear** — Avoid nagging or lecturing. Be kind, direct and consistent about what needs to happen next.
2. **Set clear expectations** — If they are not studying or training right now, they need to be actively looking for work, applying for jobs, or taking agreed action steps each week.
3. **Expect contribution at home** — They can help with chores, meals, laundry, pets, tidying, or other household responsibilities. Contribution builds responsibility.
4. **Create simple accountability** — Set weekly expectations such as job applications, follow-up calls, appointments, or research steps. Check in and follow through.
5. **Limit the comfort of doing nothing** — Sleeping all day, endless scrolling, and avoiding life should not become the easier option. Boundaries help break the stuck cycle.
6. **Follow through kindly** — If expectations are agreed on, hold them to it. Loving support and accountability can work together.

Helpful words to say

- *"I love you and I'm here to support you, but I'm not going to support staying stuck."*
- *"If you're not studying right now, the next step is to look for work and contribute at home."*
- *"You don't have to have it all figured out, but you do need to keep moving forward."*

This week, my teen can:

- ☐ Apply for jobs
- ☐ Help around the house
- ☐ Keep a simple routine
- ☐ Take one future step
- ☐ Follow through on agreed tasks

Keep in mind

- Boundaries are not punishment.
- Accountability helps teens grow.
- Responsibility builds confidence and independence.

Support with love. Lead with clarity. Expect contribution.

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Support + Accountability Agreement

A calm plan for when your teen needs structure, responsibility and forward movement.



This page is not about punishment.
It is about helping your teen build responsibility, independence and confidence.

When a teen is no longer at school, studying or training, they still need structure, contribution and purpose.

1. What I am working toward

This week, I will take steps toward:

- ☐ Finding work
- ☐ Exploring study or training
- ☐ Volunteering
- ☐ Building routine
- ☐ Helping more at home
- ☐ Other: _____

2. My weekly action steps

This week, I will complete:

- ☐ Apply for ___ jobs
- ☐ Research ___ course or career options
- ☐ Contact ___ person / business / course provider
- ☐ Attend ___ appointment / interview / open day
- ☐ Complete ___ household responsibilities
- ☐ Spend ___ hours helping at home

3. My home contribution

While I am living at home, I will contribute by:

- ☐ Helping with meals
- ☐ Cleaning / tidying shared spaces
- ☐ Doing laundry
- ☐ Caring for pets
- ☐ Helping with groceries
- ☐ Completing agreed chores
- ☐ Other: _____

4. What support I need from my parent

I would like support with:

- ☐ Creating a plan
- ☐ Staying on track
- ☐ Transport
- ☐ Job applications
- ☐ Researching options
- ☐ Confidence / motivation
- ☐ Reminders / check-ins

5. Our weekly check-in time

We will check in on:

_____

At:

_____

6. If I don't follow through

If I don't follow through, we will calmly review:

- ♥ What got in the way?
  _____
- ♥ What needs to change?
  _____
- ♥ What is the next clear step?
  _____

Parent Reminder

Boundaries are not rejection.
Accountability is not punishment.
You can love your teen deeply and still expect effort, contribution and growth.

Support gives them safety. Accountability gives them direction. Together, they build independence.

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Final Encouragement *for Parents*

Your teen does not need a perfect plan.
They need confidence, support, tools and action.

They need to know that they are not behind because they are still exploring.

They need to know that one result does not define them.

They need to know that there is more than one way forward.

And they need to know that they can take the next step even when they do not yet know the whole path.

> *The future is not a race.*
> *It is a journey of discovery.*
> *Your belief and support make all the difference.*

As a parent, you do not have to fix everything.
You simply need to keep showing them:

- I believe in you.
- I am here with you.
- We can explore this together.
- Let's take the next step.



That combination of love, belief and gentle action can make a powerful difference.

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You don't have to have all the answers.
You just have to keep showing up with love, curiosity and encouragement.
You're doing a great job.

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A Gentle Way to Support Your Teen

Life After School – Finding My Feet

Your teen does not need all the answers right now.
What helps most is calm support, gentle encouragement, and space to grow.

1. Remember

- Listen more than you lecture.
- Encourage small steps, not perfect plans.
- Help your teen notice their strengths and interests.
- Stay calm when they feel unsure.



2. Helpful Words to Say

"You do not have to figure everything out today."

"I believe in you."

"We can take one step at a time."

3. This Week's Gentle Action Step

One small way I can support my teen this week is:

Small, steady support makes a big difference.

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Understanding Your Teen

They're not being difficult. They're becoming themselves.

The teen years are a season of huge change. Their brain, emotions, identity and future thinking are all developing.

Sometimes this looks like confidence.

Sometimes it looks like confusion.

Both are normal.

When we understand what's happening beneath the surface, we can respond with more patience, less pressure and more connection.

WHAT YOUR TEEN MAY BE EXPERIENCING:

- Trying to figure out who they are
- Worrying about the future
- Comparing themselves to others
- Needing more independence
- Feeling pressure (school, social, future)
- Having big emotions they don't always know how to manage



WHAT THEY NEED MOST FROM YOU:

- Your belief in them
- Your calm presence
- Your encouragement
- A safe space to be real
- Time and patience

REFLECTION – GETTING TO KNOW YOUR TEEN EVEN BETTER

Take a few minutes to reflect on your teen right now. Small insights can help you support them better.

- What are three words you would use to describe your teen right now?
- What do you think they are most excited about at the moment?
- What do you think they are most worried or unsure about?
- What strengths do you see in them?
- What is one thing you love most about who they are becoming?

REMEMBER...

Connection comes before correction. When they feel seen and safe, they are more open to your guidance.

"You don't need to be perfect. You just need to be present.
Your teen doesn't need you to have it all figured out.
They just need you to walk beside them.

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Exploring Interests and Options

The goal isn't to choose a path today.
It's to explore possibilities and stay open.

Your teen doesn't need to have it all figured out. What they need is space to explore, try new things and discover what lights them up.

Exploration builds clarity, confidence and direction over time.

Your role is to encourage curiosity, provide opportunities and help them see that there are many ways to build a meaningful future.



WAYS TO HELP THEM EXPLORE

- Encourage them to try different things
- Support hobbies and interests
- Talk about people and careers they admire
- Watch documentaries or read stories together
- Volunteer and give back to their community
- Job shadow or interview someone they find interesting
- Encourage creative projects and ideas
- Remind them that it's okay to change their mind
- Share your own journey and lessons from the way

HELPING THEM EXPLORE COULD LOOK LIKE...

- Asking curious questions about what they enjoy
- Encouraging them to try new things
- Exploring different career paths together
- Connecting them with inspiring people
- Journaling or brainstorming ideas
- Celebrating small steps and discoveries

PARENT TIP

Exploration takes time and that's okay. Avoid rushing or pushing for answers. Instead, create a safe space for curiosity and conversations.

The more they explore, the more they'll discover what feels right for them.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I SUPPORT EXPLORATION?

- What are some things my teen is curious about right now?
- What opportunities can I help create or encourage?
- What is one new experience or activity they could try this month?
- How can I celebrate their efforts, not just the outcome?
- What can I let go of, so they have room to explore?

"The best way to predict their future is to help them explore it."

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Supporting Their Confidence and Self-Belief

Confidence grows when they feel capable, supported and safe to try.

Teens often doubt themselves, even when they don't show it. Your belief in them helps build their belief in themselves.

Focus on effort, progress and strengths – not perfection.

When your teen feels capable, they're more likely to take healthy risks, keep going and bounce back from setbacks.

WHAT BUILDS CONFIDENCE

- Encouragement and belief in their potential
- Opportunities to try new things
- Being allowed to make mistakes
- Learning from challenges
- Having responsibilities and choices
- Celebrating their efforts and values
- Feeling safe to be themselves

THE POWER OF FOCUS



INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON WHAT THEY GET WRONG...

Notice what they're getting right.



INSTEAD OF PUSHING FOR PERFECTION...

Encourage progress and persistence.



INSTEAD OF COMPARING THEM TO OTHERS...

Celebrate who they are and how far they've come.

WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO BUILD THEM UP

- "I love how you keep trying, even when it's hard."
- "You don't have to be perfect to be amazing."
- "I'm proud of how you handled that."
- "You're growing so much."
- "I believe in you."
- "It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn."
- "You bring something special to the world."
- "What did you enjoy about that?"



Your words today become their inner voice tomorrow.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I SUPPORT THEIR CONFIDENCE?

What are three strengths or qualities I see in my teen?

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....

What is something they are working on or wanting to get better at?

.....

How can I encourage and support them in this?

.....

What is one small step I can take this week to build their confidence?

.....

Behind every confident teen is a parent who noticed their light, cheered them on and never gave up on them.

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Helping Your Teen Take Small Action Steps

Big futures are built on small steps today.
Our role is to guide, support and cheer them on.

It's easy for teens to feel stuck when they think they have to figure everything out at once.

Break it down. Keep it simple.
Take one small step forward.

Small actions build confidence, create momentum and reduce overwhelm. We don't need a perfect plan – just a next step.



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT ACTION TAKING

- Encourage curiosity, not just decisions
- Help them explore options without pressure
- Support small steps, not huge leaps
- Celebrate effort and brave attempts
- Help them learn from experiences
- Remind them that it's okay to change their mind
- Encourage them to ask for help
- Build a safety net – they know you're there
- Remind them: progress is better than perfect
- Be their biggest supporter and cheerleader

EXAMPLES OF SMALL ACTION STEPS

Research one career or course that interests them.	Have a chat with someone doing something they are curious about.	Take an online quiz or course to learn something new.	Create a simple list of options or ideas to explore.	Set one small goal for the week and take the first step.

Every step counts.
Keep it small, keep it moving, keep believing.

REMINDERS FOR YOUR TEEN

- You don't have to have it all figured out.
- It's okay to start small.
- Try things. Learn things. Change things.
- Mistakes are part of learning.
- You are allowed to take your time.
- Your future is yours to create.
- You are capable, and you've got this!

Courage doesn't mean you're not scared.
It means you take the next step anyway.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I SUPPORT ACTION TAKING?

- What small step is my teen curious about right now?
- What fears or worries might be holding them back?
- How can I encourage without pushing?
- What opportunities or resources can I share with them?
- How can I celebrate their effort, not just the outcome?
- What is one small thing we can do together this week?

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the next step."

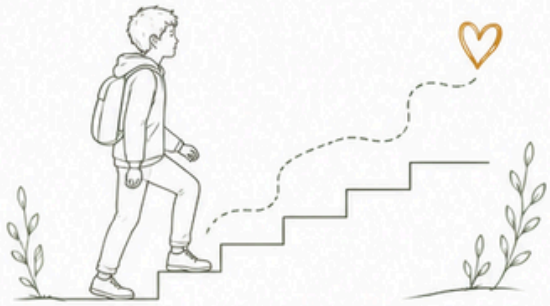
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Motivation and Building Momentum

Motivation doesn't always come first.
Action creates momentum, and momentum creates motivation.

Teens can lose motivation, especially when they feel overwhelmed, unsure or discouraged. Our role is to help them take small steps, build confidence and celebrate progress along the way.

Small steps today create big changes tomorrow.



HOW YOU CAN HELP BUILD MOMENTUM

- Break tasks into smaller, doable steps
- Set realistic goals together
- Focus on effort, not just results
- Celebrate small wins and progress
- Help them find their "why"
- Create routines that support success
- Minimise distractions and overwhelm
- Encourage consistency, not perfection
- Remind them setbacks are part of growth
- Be their biggest cheerleader

TRY THE 5 MINUTE MOMENTUM RESET

1. PAUSE	2. PRIORITISE	3. TAKE ACTION	4. CELEBRATE	5. REPEAT
Take 5 deep breaths.	Choose one small thing to focus on.	Work on it for just 5 minutes.	Acknowledge the step you took.	Momentum grows one step at a time.

WORDS THAT MOTIVATE

- "I can see you're putting in effort."
- "You don't have to do it all today."
- "Progress, not perfection."
- "Every step forward counts."
- "I believe in you."
- "You've got this."

Your belief in them can be the spark they need.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I SUPPORT THEIR MOMENTUM?

- What gets in the way of my teen's motivation?
- What motivates them or gives them energy?
- What small step can they take this week toward a goal?
- How can I make their environment more supportive?
- What will I celebrate with them this week?

Momentum doesn't come from huge leaps, but from tiny consistent steps.
Keep going, keep believing.

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Managing Pressure and Stress

Calm support helps your teen handle life's pressures.

Teens today face more pressure than ever before – school, social media, friendships, the future and more. It can feel overwhelming.

When we help our teen manage stress, we build their resilience and protect their wellbeing.

Your calm presence can help them feel safe, grounded and capable of getting through tough times.



SIGNS YOUR TEEN MAY BE FEELING OVERWHELMED

- Irritability or mood swings
- Withdrawing or wanting more space
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Lack of motivation or interest
- Feeling worried or anxious
- Complaining of headaches or tummy aches
- Being overly hard on themselves
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating

WHAT HELPS MOST

- A calm, supportive response
- Feeling heard and understood
- Practical tools to manage pressure

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

LISTEN WITHOUT FIXING

Sometimes they just need to be heard, not solved.

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS

Let them know their feelings make sense. "It's okay to feel this way."

TEACH SIMPLE STRATEGIES

Breathing, taking breaks, movement and journaling can help.

ENCOURAGE BALANCE

Support time for rest, fun, friends and activities they enjoy.

REMIND THEM THEY'RE NOT ALONE

You believe in them and you're here for them.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY TEEN WITH STRESS?

Take a moment to reflect on what might be adding pressure for your teen right now and how you can help.

What do you think is causing the most pressure for your teen right now?	How does your teen usually show when they are stressed?	What helps them feel better or more calm?	What could you do (or do more of) to support them?	What is one small step you can take this week?
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

"You can't take away all the pressures in their life, but you can be the calm place they return to.

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Conversations That Help

The right questions open doors. The right words build trust.

The way we talk with our teens can either create closeness or distance. Open, curious conversations help your teen feel heard, respected and safe to share.

It's not about having all the answers.
It's about walking beside them.



CONVERSATION STARTERS TO TRY

- What's been the best part of your week?
- What's been challenging lately?
- What are you enjoying or curious about at the moment?
- If you could try anything for a day, what would it be?
- What kind of future are you hoping for?
- How can I support you right now?
- Is there anything on your mind that you want to talk about?
- What do you need more of from me?
- Is there anything I'm not understanding?

SAY THIS...

- ✓ I'm here if you want to talk.
- ✓ I believe in you.
- ✓ It's okay to not have it all figured out.
- ✓ I'm proud of how hard you're trying.
- ✓ What do you think your next step could be?
- ✓ You've got this. I'll walk beside you.

TRY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS...

- ✗ Why don't you ever talk to me?
- ✗ You need to get your act together.
- ✗ You should already know what you want.
- ✗ I'm disappointed in you.
- ✗ You need to decide (now).
- ✗ You're on your own.

THE POWER OF LISTENING

- Listen to understand, not to reply.
- Give your teen your full attention.
- Resist the urge to fix or solve.
- Validate their feelings, even if you see things differently.
- Silence is okay. Itl gives them space to think.

When they feel heard, they feel safe.

REFLECTION – HOW ARE OUR CONVERSATIONS?

Take a few minutes to reflect honestly. Awareness creates change.

- What conversations go well with my teen?
- What topics feel tricky or create tension?
- What is one conversation I would like to have more of?
- What is one small change I can make in how I talk or listen?

Good conversations today build a stronger relationship tomorrow.

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Communicating and Staying Connected

Strong connections don't happen by accident.
They're built through everyday moments and open hearts.

As teens grow, they naturally seek more independence. But they still need to know that you're in their corner.

Open, respectful and consistent communication helps build trust that lasts.

It's not about having all the answers. It's about being present, listening deeply and showing you care – even when conversations are tough.



WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED

- Create regular one-on-one time
- Ask open-ended questions
- Really listen – without interrupting or fixing
- Show interest in their world
- Respect their opinions, even when you disagree
- Share your own stories and mistakes
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Check in, not just when there's a problem
- Use humour and have fun together
- Let them know your love is unconditional

OPEN QUESTIONS THAT INVITE REAL CONVERSATIONS

- What was the best part of your day?
- What's something on your mind lately?
- What do you enjoy most right now? Why?
- What are you thinking about for the future?
- How can I best support you right now?

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Choose the right time and place
- Put away distractions
- Stay calm and curious
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Validate their feelings
- Avoid lectures and criticism
- Give them space, but stay close
- Apologise when you're wrong
- Speak with respect, always

Connection is built in the little moments you choose to show up.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I STRENGTHEN OUR CONNECTION?

- What helps my teen feel heard and understood?
- What gets in the way of our communication?
- How do I usually respond when my teen opens up?
- What is one way I can show more interest in their world?
- When can we create more quality time together?
- What is one small action I can take this week to strengthen our connection?

Your presence speaks louder than your words.
Being connected matters more than being perfect.

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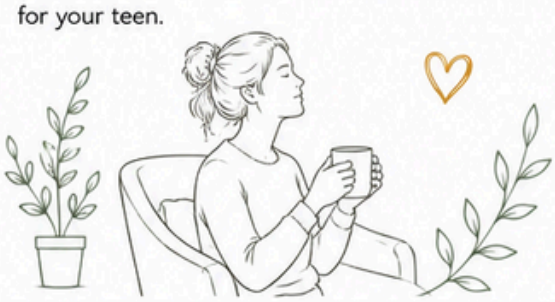
Self-Care for You

You can't pour from an empty cup.
Your well-being matters – for you and for your teen.

Parenting a teenager can be rewarding, but it can also be exhausting. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish – it's essential.

When you take care of you, you have more patience, more energy and more to give.

Small acts of self-care every day help you stay strong, calm and present for your teen.



SELF-CARE IDEAS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Take a few deep breaths and pause
- Move your body – even a short walk helps
- Get enough sleep – rest is not a luxury
- Eat nourishing food and drink water
- Spend time outdoors and in nature
- Do something that brings you joy
- Connect with supportive people
- Set boundaries and say no when needed
- Give yourself permission to rest
- Remember: progress, not perfection

5 MINUTE SELF-CARE RESET

1. BREATHE
Take 5 slow, deep breaths. Inhale calm, exhale stress.

2. CHECK IN
How am I feeling right now? What do I need?

3. CHOOSE ONE
Pick one small thing that will support your well-being.

4. TAKE 5 MINUTES
Do it just for you. No guilt. You deserve it.

5. NOTICE
Notice how you feel. Carry that calm with you.

KIND REMINDERS FOR YOU

- It's okay not to have it all figured out.
- You are doing better than you think.
- You don't have to be perfect to be a great parent.
- Your feelings are valid.
- You are allowed to take up space.
- You matter.

Be kind to yourself – you are doing an important job.

REFLECTION – HOW CAN I TAKE BETTER CARE OF ME?

- What drains me the most right now?
- What helps me feel calm and recharged?
- What is one thing I can do for myself this week?
- Who can support me when I need it?
- What do I want to remember about taking care of myself?

"You can't always control what happens, but you can choose to take care of you. You are important. You are enough."

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