

Times Have Changed Since You Were a Teenager.

Today's teens are mobile, connected and high-tech. In fact, 87 percent of teens over the age of 12 are heavy Internet users. A steady diet of text messages, cell phone connectivity, reality TV, and anonymous Internet activity offers access to experiences teens aren't ready to process developmentally, like sex, pornography, and contact with strangers. And yet, society increasingly normalizes these experiences. Parents can help by taking steps to protect teens. Discuss your family's values when opportunities arise.

By nature, teens are volatile emotionally and stressed by increasing pressures from parents, society, and peers to over-achieve academically, be popular, and fit an unrealistic body image ideal.

Increasingly, children are also growing up in single parent families due to divorce, death, or incarceration. And, here in California, teens from a large immigrant population often struggle to adapt to an all-new culture. Even affluent teens can suffer from neglect by career-minded parents.

What can you do as a parent? Stay close to your teenager. Know where she is and what he is doing. Be a positive role model in the choices you make. Your teen learns by watching what you do, not what you say.

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are "medically necessary." This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists

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How WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR TEEN?

Raising a Healthy Adolescent.



Brought to you by the
California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists



DO'S AND DON'TS WITH TEENS

- Do know your teens' friends and their friends' parents. Peers are important influences.
- Do limit screen time in favor of active pursuits.
- Do negotiate rules as guidelines.
- Don't undercut your spouse or ex in front of your teen. Presenting a united front is critical.
- Don't let your teen opt out of family vacations or special events.
- Don't wait to seek help if you suspect a serious problem

WHEN IT'S TIME TO SEEK HELP

Mental health disorders are dramatically on the rise. From eating disorders and cutting to anxiety, depression and substance abuse—the stakes are high.

Frequently though, parents wait too long to seek help for their teenagers. Remember, early intervention can put your child back on track to personal growth and achievement more quickly. Seek help when your child:

- Has dropping grades
- Disconnects from peers and social activities
- Doesn't want to engage in sports or extra-curricular activities anymore
- Resorts to violence
- Sneaks out late at night
- Won't communicate at all despite your best efforts

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- **Teens needs you to be a parent**—not a friend—even when it's unpopular. Set boundaries and follow through with consequences.
- **Ask questions. Don't lecture or shame.** Check in with your teen with honest, direct questions when you sense something is wrong. Teens open up more when they feel safe and respected by parents. Try to role model calm problem-solving skills.
- **Be brave about privacy issues.** Safety is more important than privacy. Monitor cell phone usage, text messages, and websites where your teen browses and posts. Block inappropriate websites. Call other parents to check up. Your teen's life may depend upon your active engagement.
- **Stay involved.** Teens who feel a spiritual connection to something greater than themselves and those who spend regular time with family often navigate adolescence better than those who don't. These forces provide a healthy counter-balance to all the pressures your teen faces.
- **Find the right therapist.** Look for therapists who have training and experience with adolescents. Seek out someone who is supportive, and goal-oriented. Use short telephone interviews to shop for a good fit with potential therapists. Ask about availability, fees, if they accept your health insurance, and how they approach problems like yours.

OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 29,000 mental health professionals. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com™ so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage in therapy to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder™ is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.

