

# **QUICK THERAPY SOLUTIONS PROVIDED BY COUNSELLING IN FRANCE**

## **TEENAGERS' DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR**

The package comprises:

1. Introduction to tackling difficult behaviour
2. Worksheet 1: For the teenager and adult to do together
3. Worksheet 2: Questions for the teenager
4. Worksheet 3: Questions for the adult or adults
5. Worksheet 4 - Homework – aims and strategies
6. Bullying and how to deal with it

Please continue with the worksheets that you have printed from the package. These are designed to be completed at your own pace and, ideally, never more than one a day. The reason for this is that the worksheets are designed to help you process what is going on for you and you need time to think and work on the issues that the worksheets may bring up for you. Everyone is different and it is up to you what pace you set yourself. The control is always yours.

## Introduction YP1 Difficult Behaviour

### Tackling difficult behaviour in teenagers

If your teenager often displays bad behaviour i.e. being loud, using offensive language and disruptive, you may be feeling exhausted by trying to deal with it. Remember that it is the bad behaviour you need to deal with and that the teenager is not 'bad'. Behaviour can always be modified and sometimes situations can be avoided if there is a trigger point. A lot of difficult behaviour in teenagers is caused by hormones and is more a case of managing it rather than punishing it.

These are the "4 Rs" for dealing with bad behaviour:

#### REWARD:

Positively reinforce good behaviour by praising, giving rewards and giving good attention.

#### REDUCTION:

Negatively reinforce with quick and clear punishment i.e. removing privileges, stopping pleasurable activities. You need to be consistent and follow through with threats i.e. "if you don't stop kicking that ball at the windows, I will take the ball and you won't get it back for a day".

#### ROUTINE:

Teenagers feel safe if they have a good structure to work to and those who are acting out by behaving badly will find it easier to conform if their routine is clear. Try to get them up on time, eat a good breakfast and have a clear time for bed which is reasonable for their age. If they are going out, ask them to let you know if they are going to be unavoidably late.

#### REASONABLE RULES:

Set the boundaries for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The rules can be quite simple:

1. Simple rewards for good behaviour, not too big and not too small but right for the behaviour
2. Simple and specific rules for behaviour i.e. you can watch TV, play on the computer or go out but ONLY after homework is done or a meal is eaten
3. Stick to the rules. They won't work if you keep changing the goal-posts. If the teenager breaks the rule, stick to the punishment.
4. Agree rules beforehand and even put a list up on the fridge so that everyone is clear.

#### IF YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DISCIPLINE YOUR TEENAGER

Here are a few pointers:

1. Make sure the punishments are not too harsh but are quick to use and easily enforced
2. Mean what you say so that your teenager learns that you mean it
3. Get their attention with eye contact and speaking calmly and clearly, no shouting
4. Do not get into long and involved discussion. Mean it and carry it out

#### CONSEQUENCES

Finally, your teenager will learn that bad behaviour has undesirable consequences. The consequences of behaving well should make your child feel good:

- ◇ giving your time and attention
- ◇ money or material things
- ◇ they get to do things they enjoy

The punishment may fail if:

- ◇ it's too harsh
- ◇ if it isn't immediate
- ◇ if you aren't consistent, you must mean what you say

### **QUICK THERAPY SOLUTIONS**

Worksheet 1 YP1  
THE FOLLOWING WORKSHEETS 2 and 3 ARE FOR THE TEENAGER  
AND ADULT TO SIT TOGETHER BUT DO SEPARATELY

Make sure that you and your teenager are in a quiet room where you will not be interrupted and where you cannot hear the rest of the family or neighbours talking or playing. This is so that you can both concentrate on the worksheets without any distractions. Have a soft drink to hand and sit in comfortable chairs at a table.

Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. You should both feel able to say what you think and feel so explain this to your teenager, that the idea of the exercise is to help you both get on better and to do that, you both need to be truthful. This will give the teenager a safe structure and it is imperative that you do not show any reaction during the exercise that will make the teenager feel guilty or ashamed in any way.

Here are the ground rules for both of you:

1. Once we start, we need to concentrate on what we are doing and we must listen properly to each other. If we can't do that today, we will choose another time.
2. We both need to be truthful. I don't want to hurt your feelings and I'm sure you don't want to hurt my feelings but if we are truthful, we can both understand how each other feels about things and then we can sort out any problems.
3. Whatever is talked about between us today will stay between us, we won't tell anyone else unless we both agree that it's OK to tell someone else. That way, we will both find it easier to say what we think.
4. Each exercise will take about 30 minutes. After that time, we will check if we are getting tired and want to stop for today.
5. The first lot of questions are for the teenager. The second set are for the adult. We need to listen carefully to each other and only when we are finished, we can talk about how we feel about what we both wrote.

Not every young person is able to read and write so if your teenager is unable to do this on their own, do it with them but it is important that you don't guide or influence them. Their answers must come from them as this exercise is designed to help them identify their own emotions and make sense of them in context. Your contribution will be the most valuable if you can help them to understand what the exercise wants them to do. If you prompt them or make suggestions, it will be a useless exercise. Young people gain the most from this by being in control and making their own decisions based on what *they* feel, they shouldn't be thinking about pleasing you by giving the answer they think you want. If you don't consider that you cannot do this successfully, it may be more helpful to ask a friend or other family member to do this with your child instead.

If there is friction or difficult issues between a particular adult and teenager, then that adult should be the one to do the adult's questions in the exercise, but both adults can join in if the teenager wants that. Just print out two "Adults' questions" worksheets.

Please read the questions to your teenager if they cannot read and you may need to write exactly what they say if they cannot write. Don't analyse this as you go, wait until the teenager has finished the exercise and then it would be helpful to both of you to talk about what answers have come up and what they might mean. The idea is that you both learn from what is written.

It is important that adults share the questions and answers with the teenager and that the teenager shares his or her answers with the adult.

Worksheet 2 YP1  
QUESTIONS FOR TEENAGER

1. Who are the family members who live in your house?

Are there any other of your immediate family members who live apart from you?

Talking about the adults in your house:

What things do they get angry about? (not always to do with you)

Adult 1:

.....

Adult 2:

.....

How do they behave when they are angry?

Adult 1:

.....

Adult 2:

.....

How does that make you feel?

.....

Do you behave in the same way as either of these adults when you get angry? If not, how do you behave?

.....

3. What makes them sad?

Adult 1:

.....

Adult 2:

.....  
How do you know when they are sad?

Adult 1:

.....  
Adult 2:

.....  
Is there anything that you would like to change about them in the way they behave?

.....  
What would they like to change about you?

.....  
Say three things that make you angry

1)

2)

3)

What do adults do when you are angry?

.....  
Do adults notice when you are unhappy? If they notice, what do they say to you?

.....  
5. Say three things that make you unhappy

1)

2)

3)

How do you behave when you are unhappy?

.....

5. Say three things that make you feel worried about your family and your life today

1)

2)

3)

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Final question:

What would you like to change in your life?

1.

2.

3.

.....

Thinking about the three things you have just written, can the adults in your family make them happen?

.....

What do you think their reaction will be when they see that you what you have written here?

## QUESTIONS FOR THE ADULT OR ADULTS

Young people may not understand the difference between their power and the adult's power but psychologically, it is very powerful if the adult and teenager meet on a 'level playing field' and that the teenager is listened to and is able to express feelings. Very often, adults follow the script that they grew up with, perhaps with messages saying "do as you are told, don't question me" or "behave as I expect or I will withdraw my approval and love temporarily" etc which they may have had said to them. This exercise is powerful because it takes the controlling parental messages out and puts them to one side. It helps build trust between the adult and young person as long as it is not abused in any way.

.....

What makes me angry? (not always to do with the teenager if possible)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How do I behave when I'm angry?

What would be a better way to behave?

Agree a sign for when either you or your teenager are so angry that you feel out of control, like a hand gesture in a T, saying "I need some time out". It is important to have a STOP sign between you, so that when you are really angry, you will do this so that there is a break in the argument or situation where you can both cool off. You will both need to agree to this.

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What things make me feel sad or depressed?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Agree with your teenager that if either of you feel sad or upset, that you will talk about it if you can (only discuss age-appropriate issues with your teenager)

What would be a good way for you and your teenager to look after each other? Agree one thing that you can do for your teenager this week that will make them happy and one thing that the teenager can do for you. If it works, give yourselves a reward together. Make sure that time together is a valued thing, however difficult it may be to find time in busy lives. Plan an outing together and make sure you do it. If you have other children, arrange for another grown-up to have them for an hour at least so that you and your teenager can spend quality time together. Try and make quality time together a regular thing.

**QUICK THERAPY SOLUTIONS**

Worksheet 4 YP1

## HOMEWORK – AIMS AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Not many of us really enjoy homework but sometimes we need strategies to reinforce behaviour. The aims written below are just that – aims, they are not written in stone, but sometimes things need to be practiced in order to make them second nature to us. I would suggest that you write your own lists if the ones below don't fit your situation. One is for the adult to stick to and the other is for the teenager to stick to. Please give them a try as they will hopefully make life easier and calmer for everyone. Even if it only works for a week, you will be on the path.

Write these out or print them and cut them out, after filling in the right names for the adult and the teenager. You may want to slightly change the aims always try to make the aims positive and encouraging change. The whole point is to make adults and teenagers happier together. It's never going to be easy – all adults have been teenagers and can remember how difficult our emotional lives were to handle and how awkward and hot-headed we sometimes felt.

(Teenager's name)

### AIMS FOR WEEK ONE

- Aim to say at least one nice or positive thing to (adult's name) every day
- At the end of each day, write down things that make me annoyed with (adult's name) This will be talked about at the end of Week One
- Aim not to slam doors or damage furniture
- Aim not to hurt people physically in any way
- Use the T sign for time out when you are really angry and physically leave the room to cool off
- Try to talk about things in a non-blaming way (ie not saying "it's your fault I'm so angry because...", but say instead "I feel really cross about.....can we talk about it, please?"
- At the end of the week, arrange some time with (adult's name) to talk about the issues and if any problems arose, try to talk them through
- Think of a reward for you and (adult's name) to enjoy together after a week has gone. It could be a shopping trip, a shared bar of chocolate or a walk together

(Adult's name)

### AIMS FOR WEEK ONE

- Aim to say at least one nice or positive thing to (teenager's name) every day
- At the end of each day, write down things that make me annoyed with (teenager's name) This will be talked about at the end of Week One
- Aim not to over-react to (teenager's name) if they get angry or loud. Walk into another room or use Time Out sign
- Aim not to say damaging or over-negative things to (teenager's name)
- Try to talk about things in a non-blaming way (ie not saying "you are making me ill...", but say instead "I find this very difficult to cope with....can we talk about it, please?"
- At the end of the week, arrange some time with (teenager's name) to talk about the issues and if any problems arose, try to talk them through
- Think of a reward for you and (teenager's name) to enjoy together after a week has gone. It could be a shopping trip, a shared bar of chocolate or a walk together

## QUICK THERAPY SOLUTIONS

Extra worksheet in case your teenager is being bullied

## IDEAS FOR DEALING WITH BULLIES

1) Look the bully in the eye, try not to look away and keep your face as expressionless as possible. Keep very calm by taking some deep breaths and by telling yourself 'I can deal with this'. Always keep eye contact with the bully, trying not to show him or her that you are intimidated. Your body language will show the bully how you are feeling, so keep your fists unclenched and relax your face and your shoulders. Try to keep your voice calm and confident even if you are feeling tense and frightened. Bullies do not like assertive eye contact and may back down if they sense that you are not afraid of them. The sense of power that bullies get is from your frightened expression and the feelings of inadequacy that they can make you feel.

2) If you are being beaten up or are being physically hurt in some other way by one person or by a group of bullies, it is important to tell an adult, either your parents or a teacher, even if you are going to be accused of 'grassing'. No-one should ever have to put up with being physically abused and you will usually find that it is the bullies who don't want you to tell. They would lose their power!

3) If you are being verbally abused, find your own way to deal with this, perhaps by calmly walking away or by ignoring it. This will have the effect of making the bully feel small and that the threats that usually work don't work any more. The bully is losing his/her power and you are gaining it. If you can show that you are calm and controlled while he/she is abusive, the bully may react by shouting more abuse or getting really angry. If this happens, remember that you have the upper hand and it may get worse before it gets better. If you can cope with this part, you are winning and the bully is losing. You may want to practise things to say back, for example "whatever" or "Really? How fascinating!". Try not to be aggressive or to shout back as, again, this will give the bully power over you - the power to upset you and get under your skin. Bullies can usually pick exactly the right things to make you feel terrible. It may help if you remember that:

- Bullies are usually frightened people who need to make you feel frightened to make themselves feel better
- They may have chosen bullying as a way of being bullied themselves, by others of their ages, their brothers or sisters and sometimes their parents
- They are often as frightened of being powerless as you are but they hide their fear by using aggression
- Remember that there is nothing wrong with you whatever the bully or bullies say. It's very hard to deal with the bullying and most adults have had some experience of it in their lives so it's not just you
- You may feel very alone and feel unable to cope with it, but however you choose to handle it, find understanding friends or adults for support and to help you find the way to deal with it that is right for you and that works
- If you find that you often make others angry and that you keep being picked on or bullied, try to develop your listening skills. This will give you an understanding of how others think. It will help you to deal with difficult situations
- We may know our own world and sets of rules but you need to listen and take an interest in others people to develop an understanding of other people's rules and worlds.