

At times it may be difficult for young people to communicate to parents about how they are feeling, and parents themselves may find it difficult to understand what their child is going through.

This leaflet draws on the experiences of young people and attempts to address some of these communication issues.

We understand that every parent – child relationship is unique. We hope that some of the issues raised will help.

Below we have illustrated a common problem situation between parents and a child.

‘...Ben feels trapped and alone. Nothing seems to capture his interest anymore. He is beginning to spend more and more time in his room and is becoming increasingly irritable.

It’s been the sixth night in a row that Ben has not been out with his friends. His parents find this unusual as he is normally an outgoing person; they question him on his behaviour.

After a little inner turmoil, Ben plucks up the courage to tell his parents how he is feeling ...’

A common way that parents react, could be:

‘...Hearing this Ben’s dad laughs and tells him to pull himself together - pointing out that he has no reason to feel like this.

His mum on the other hand sighs and tells him that he is going through a ‘phase’ which he will soon snap out of. She gives him a stern look and walks off.

Ben’s dad grunts in agreement and goes back to his newspaper.

Ben feels upset by their reaction. He only wanted them to listen...’

Parents can also react differently:

‘...Ben’s dad turns the telly off. His mum asks him how long he has been feeling like this.

He shrugs his shoulders and tells them it’s been a while.

Ben and his parents have a lengthy discussion about how he is feeling., They let him do the talking without jumping to conclusions.

*Although Ben’s problems have not miraculously vanished, **he feels reassured that his parents are approachable...***

Both outcomes highlight a number of issues:

TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY

For young people life at times can seem very difficult, often consisting of upheaval and turmoil. It can take a lot of courage to ask for help or even admit to having a problem. **Don’t trivialise the situation.**

LISTEN

Make an active effort to make sure they know you are giving them your undivided attention. Simple things like turning off the television can show that you care and that you are willing to listen. Try to let them do the talking. Don’t jump to conclusions. Give them the time to put across what they are feeling as they may have problems expressing themselves.

SHOW THAT YOU CARE

Use words and actions to show that they are important to you. Simple things like spending time with them, asking how their day was and showing warmth and concern can go a long way. Make sure they know that you are accessible if they want to talk. However, avoid smothering them and being too clingy.

BE PATIENT

Remember what your child is going through won’t disappear overnight. Your continued support through times of frustration is important, don’t give up on them. It may take time to establish trust between you and them.

Remember that not all problems are the same, but through **communication** and **understanding** you can get through it **together**.

Further reading:

HOW TO TALK SO KIDS WILL LISTEN & LISTEN SO KIDS WILL TALK

by Adele Faber & Elain Mazlish
Piccadilly Press 2001

Price: £9.99

You may also find the following organisations helpful:

YoungMinds Parents Information Service gives advice to parents or carers who may be concerned about the mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child or young person.

Freephone: **0800 018 2138**

www.youngminds.org.uk

TSA (Trust for the Study of Adolescence) produce several books and pamphlets which can help parents to deal effectively with some of the issues young people are faced with.

phone: **01273 693311**

www.tsa.uk.com

This leaflet has been written and produced by young people - the members of

*Young***PAPYRUS**

If you need to talk with a professionally qualified adviser,

call **HOPELineUK** on:

0870 170 4000

or 01978 367333

For further information contact

PAPYRUS, Rossendale GH, Union Road,
Rawtenstall. BB4 6NE



Tel & Fax: 01706 214449

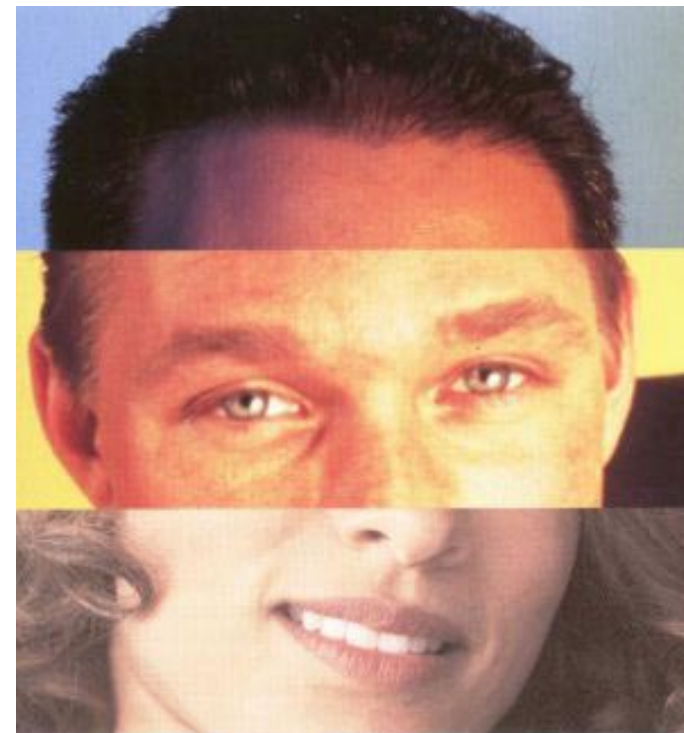
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Listen
to me...

COMMUNICATING WITH
YOUNG PEOPLE