



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb County

Connecting With Your Teen or Tween



During our teens' journey to adulthood, we parents must change our expectations of what "connection" means and how to navigate it. They are individuating from us, and that's a good, natural developmental process that involves rapid brain development while they are forming identity. This development often comes

across as anger, frustration, selfishness, or criticism of all they've known thus far. Your parenting style, values, and haircut are all suspect. They are wrestling with what they've experienced and figuring out how to carve their path forward.

Sometimes, we aren't ready for these changes. And sometimes, their expressions of the individuation process can hurt our feelings.

Three core elements that work together to improve the connection with our adolescents in healthy and productive ways are *reaching*, *availability*, and *receiving*.

Reaching: A teen reaching looks very different than a young child begging for a hug. Teens may rant over a difficult situation or rage against a grade they feel is unfair. They might only approach you when they want to hang out with friends or need a ride. Try to listen for their underlying need. They often seek a safe space to dump these challenging thoughts or feelings. Their need is simply to be seen and heard.

Availability: Be available when your tween or teen reaches for you. Your presence communicates that it's safe to keep reaching for you. If you cannot be present when they reach, revisit the conversation. You are still their anchor. Your teen still needs reassurance that you are there, waiting, and available when they need it.

Receiving: You will enhance your ability to be available and present when your teen reaches for you if you can also increase your capacity for receiving from them. What they can and will give you changes dramatically in these years. Suddenly, they are critical of your parenting style or argue with you about politics, religion, and culture. Your jokes are lame, and those jeans are just embarrassing.

Don't accept disrespect or abuse from your children. However, you can increase the range of what you do receive from them to keep up with their changing brain and developmental needs. Let them know that while you might not accept their delivery, you do accept their differing opinions and their process of developing their ideas.

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For more information on the Post Adoption Resource Center please contact us at 313-530-9746

Or visit our website at PARC-orchards.org



Connecting With Your Teen or Tween (continued)

Isolation is perhaps the most significant risk factor for tweens and teens, especially those impacted by prenatal substance exposure and trauma. To counter this and other risk factors they face as they form their identity, you may have to get outside your comfort zone and change how present you are in their life.

Open your home. You don't need to create involved, expensive, lavish events. Honestly, the simpler and more low-key, the better for most teens! Order pizza, throw enticing snacks on the table, get out the board games or video controllers, and make your house the place to be. Welcome their friends and provide safe (but not hovering) supervision where they can build connections with their peers.

The added benefit is getting to know their friends! Gatherings in your home are fantastic opportunities to see your kid through their peers' eyes. You can learn a lot about what they are attracted to, how they do with social skills, and what kind of friends they attract.

Help your teen find their niche. Whatever it is that makes your teen light up, do that! Whether it's a club at school, instrumental lessons, art classes, or theater, help your teen figure it out and go all in with them. Your child may not love your noticeable presence or participation in these activities – and that's okay. Please find a way to join them and affirm their choices and talents.

Create family rituals. Whether you do a weekly Family Movie Night, cook together, or a regular game with their favorite candy as currency, your traditions become the ties that bind. Consistency and predictability build trust and safety amid this strange, challenging season of individuating.

Don't ask too many questions! To our teens, questions often feel intrusive and over the top. Questions also increase expectations – for the “right” answers or to share more than they are ready to share, and they may shut down.

Try new things together. Have some fun together by doing new things. Try new recipes, learn a skill, take a class, or join a club. Let them pick something they want to learn and go all in together. The bursts of dopamine you both will get from conquering a new skill is an excellent connector.

Let your teen teach you something new. Boost your connection by asking them to teach you one of their skills. Get into their world and invite them to show you how to do that new TikTok dance or a soccer trick they've perfected. Ask them to help you find apps to menu plan or manage time. Let them teach you how to use it. When they are better at you in a specific area and allow them to teach you, you show them another side of yourself. You are also communicating interest and respect for their individuality.

Continue offering physical affection. Your teen's need for physical affection likely hasn't changed, but how they prefer to express and receive it may have. Some kids won't shy away from occasional hugs but might prefer a fist bump. When you are working in the kitchen side-by-side, offer a shoulder bump. Back scratches at the end of the day can be calming. It's also an excellent opportunity to practice physical closeness without the eye contact that might feel “too much” for them.

*Adolescence can be challenging to navigate, but there is also much to celebrate at this stage.

Our most important tip is to delight in your teen! Don't be so afraid of all the “what ifs” and new dilemmas of adolescence that you forget to enjoy who they are. Some days, it will be more challenging than others. But look for the joy in being with them as they pursue their identity. See your teen for who they are now and who they are becoming. And let them know that they are cherished and loved!

**Information expanded from: Creating a Family and a Dr. Aguayo podcast*

PARC in the Community

PARC sends a huge *THANK YOU* to the **Jockey Being Family** program that continues to support our family activities. Check out their website at: creatingafamily.org to register for many free trainings and sign up to receive their newsletter.



JOCKEY
BEING FAMILY.

PARC continues to hold the Macomb and Southfield parent supports group and art group on a monthly basis.



In February, PARC held an all day self-care conference. Parents got massages, did crafts and yoga and enjoyed a healthy lunch. While the parents were being pampered, the children did some yoga, crafts, and played games. Each family was sent home with a meal, to make the rest of their day a little less stressful!



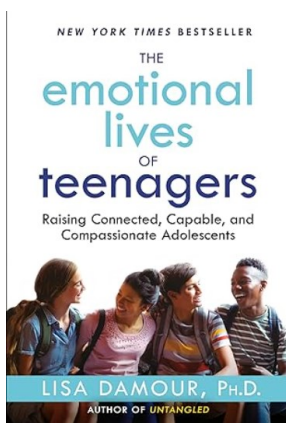
Several PARC families joined in on the community art day with Orchards Children's Services and the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences. We got creative with lots of paint, lights and photography and even got to paint our hands for a collaborative piece!



Dr. Mark Ragg joined us recently for a training on sexually reactive youth. While this is a difficult topic, Dr. Mark Ragg heard every families story and engaged in a very informative discussion.

PARC has several things in the works for this upcoming months, be sure to keep an eye out. As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to reach out!

Suggested Read



The Emotional Lives of Teenagers: Raising Connected, Capable, and Compassionate Adolescents
Author: Lisa Damour Ph.D.

In teenagers, powerful emotions come with the territory. And as teens contend with academic pressure, social media stress, worries about the future, and concerns about their own mental health, it's easy for them—and their parents—to feel anxious and overwhelmed. But it doesn't have to be that way.

With clear, research-informed explanations alongside illuminating, real-life examples, *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers* gives parents the concrete, practical information they need to steady their teens through the bumpy yet transformational journey into adulthood.

Upcoming Meetings, Trainings & Events

ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075

Facilitator: Betsy Thomas

*Dinner and childcare will be provided



MACOMB COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: Last Wednesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 p.m

Where: New Life Presbyterian Church

11300 19 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48314

Facilitator: Mikki Boury

*Dinner and childcare will be provided



ART. YOU. POWERFUL.

When: Monthly, starting January 22, 2024 - See emails/social media for full schedule

Time: 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (ages 12 and under) / 6:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (ages 12 and over)

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075



2-DAY CONFERENCE: NURTURING RESILIENCE: A PARENT TRAINING ON ACE'S, PCE'S & RAISING TRAUMA-INFORMED CHILDREN

When: Saturday, April 20, 2024 **AND** Saturday, May 4, 2024

Time: 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 601, Southfield, MI 48075 **OR** via Zoom

Meeting ID: 865 1417 0099

Passcode: 6qs8WH

Facilitator: Cendie Stanford



Focus: Throughout this training participants will gain a better understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), and their profound impact on children's lives. Parents and caregivers will explore evidence-based strategies for fostering resilience and providing nurturing environments for children with a history of trauma. By the end of the workshop, participants will emerge equipped with a deeper understanding of trauma, resilience, and practical strategies to support children in overcoming adversity and thriving in life.

★ Please keep an eye out for updates via email and social media! Connect with PARC at:

Website: parc-orchards.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter

Email: parcocs@orchards.org