

FREE EBOOK



## **How Teens Are Making Their Life Choices**

*“The Guide to Understanding how  
today’s Teenager’s think and what You,  
the Parent, can do to Respond Best”*

**Written by Brian McAleer  
Youth Empowerment Coach**



Dear Parent,

You have received this ebook after opting in via the home page of [brianmcaleer.com](http://brianmcaleer.com)

Congratulations for taking action. You obviously care deeply about the well-being of your teenager and want the best for them.

Please read this eBook carefully. Note any questions you may have and feel free to ask me via email [info@brianmcaleer.com](mailto:info@brianmcaleer.com)

Thanks again for taking action and I hope to be of further assistance to you and the young person in your life.



Regards,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Brian McAleer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light yellow rectangular background.

Brian McAleer  
Youth Empowerment Coach

**HOW AND WHY TEENS THINK THE  
WAY THEY DO**

- THE SIGNS
- THE BEHAVIOURS
- THE RISKS
- WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

# T H E   S I G N S

Your teenager can tell you more through what they're doing rather than what they're saying. Remember "Actions speak louder than words" and teens can be guilty of not talking enough, and may mislead you or flat out lie about what they're thinking and doing, out of fear of judgement. But look out for...

## **Anger**

- When it's obvious, and when it's subtle

## **Anxiety**

- The silent killer

## **Stress**

- It's higher than ever, and isn't always easy to spot.

## **Isolation**

- Not just restricted to a teen staying in their room. There is mental isolation, which can be hard to spot in a crowded school

## **Identity Confusion**

- Gender and sexuality based, peer influenced, culture based  
TIP: watch the changes in appearance, mood, speech and expression; this is the teens search for identity

Teenagers behave in various ways, and this is how they act out their thoughts, feelings and ideas. It's either self-exploration or to get attention. Here are some of the behaviours you may be seeing from your teen, which stems from "The Signs" discussed on the previous page...

## **Being Anti-Social**

- Sitting on a computer is not always being anti-social; it's how your teens socialise
- Teens deliberately isolate themselves at times to figure out their place in a group, at school and in the world at large

## **Keeping to Themselves**

- Hours in their room
  - Not joining in sports
  - Not talking to / spending time with the family
- TIP: Don't be alarmed; it's their way to work things out

## **Rebelling**

- This takes on many forms; obvious and subtle, concerning and down right worrying
  - Every teen does it; if you try to stop it, they will rebel even more
- TIP: Accept their developmental need to rebel is about asserting their independence and need to control and develop clear boundaries around what you will accept and won't accept

## **Coming home late / not coming home at all**

- Testing the boundaries
  - Wanting to be independent
  - Wanting to be accepted by their peers/ social groups
  - Avoidance
- TIP: When your teen is ignoring or avoiding you, quite often it's when they want your attention the most

It's a normal part of adolescent development, that teens will take risks. In fact, scientific studies have determined that the human mind develops up until the age of 25. Before this age, young people primarily think using the frontal lobe part of their brain, which has not fully developed strong judgement and clear boundaries when it comes to taking risks. Here is what teens can do to explore the possibilities as a result of "The Behaviours" covered on the previous page...

## **Experimenting with Alcohol & Drugs**

- Every teen is exposed, every teen will be offered and tempted, most teen will try some form of alcohol and drugs at least once,

- The more they're told not to, the more they will want to decide for themselves, and confirm that decision by actually trying it

TIP: If you think alcohol & drug use may be an issue for your teenager, look out for the signs and behaviours associated with it such as; deterioration in physical appearance, change in mood, oversleeping or not sleeping enough, slurred speech, impaired judgement, etc

## **Having Unsafe Sex**

- Every teen thinks about it, talks about it, watches it online and wants to try it

- They think they're in control, but don't always have the facts or know the consequences

TIP: Be comfortable to talk about sex and accept your teens idea of a sex life is probably completely different; it's new, exciting, fun, associated with being cool and accepted by peers, and can be used as a topic of bullying and ridicule

**Continued over page>>>**

## **Disengaging from or Dropping Out of School Deliberately**

Multiple signs of this, most of which happen at school, but here's what you can look out for at home;

- Constant sick days from school
- Leaving for school earlier than normal / getting home later than normal (possible wagging)
- Avoiding questions or conversations about school
- Showing strong disinterest or disconnection from school life
- Not speaking to school friends / or little to no school friends at all

### **How it escalates;**

- Getting calls from the school
- Your teen constantly talking about life outside of school, i.e. working full time, doing an apprenticeship, mentioning other teens who left school early

### **The short-term and long-term consequences of disengagement and drop out;**

- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Refused re-entry from school

### **The reality for early school leavers;**

- The rules are less, but the responsibility and accountability is higher – many teens underestimate this or deny the change in lifestyle
- There are also new possibilities, which can appear as risks at first, but with careful planning and preparation for early school leaving, it can be a successful transition

## The Signs

Actions speak louder than words. Listen to what your teen is *not* saying and pick up on the physical cues, because these are the thoughts and feelings that give way to...



## The Behaviours

First it's a one off behaviour, then it can be a regular occurrence, and any behaviour repeated becomes a habit, and habits can be hard to break. Behaviours influence how teens speak and act, and how they act determines...



## The Risks

Without recognising the signs and dealing with the behaviours earlier, your teen can reach the point where experimentation and expression take over, and they won't listen to anyone or any reason if they are convinced in their own choices. Keep in mind, there can be both negative and positive risk taking from teens, so be alert, but try to keep an open mind to your teens need to discover and learn for themselves.

Knowing this pattern better now, gives you, The Parent, several possibilities on how to understand and predict the choices your teen will make for their life. Let's take a look at those now over the page..

From what you've just read on the previous pages, a lot of that doesn't sound new. My intention here is to acknowledge the realities of raising teens and how they live out their lives, which as their Parent, you know best. But it still doesn't make the job any easier. As a Parent, you can regularly feel stressed, scared, overwhelmed and frustrated. So let me now touch on the 3 Key Areas of Successfully Parenting teens.

## **Develop an Understanding**

- Remember...your teen is a developing adolescent
  - The world your teen is growing up in today is different from your teen experience and how the future looks to teens is less optimistic and positive
- TIP: As the saying goes, "First seek to understand, then be understood"
- Getting to know your teen through their various stages and changes, will help you anticipate their choices, and they will appreciate you taking the time to understand them. In return they are more likely to be open to understanding where you're coming from in your parenting.

## **Effective communication**

- See life from your teens eyes
  - Don't make assumptions; ask questions
  - Show you've been listening by clarifying what they said
- TIP: Often the best conversations we have are the ones where we don't speak much. The art of being present and listening is so powerful for another, especially a teen as they verbalise what's going on their head. You don't always have to have a question or the solution at hand. Just listen...

## **Building a more positive relationship**

- Don't try to be their friend
  - Move away from control towards influence
  - Give them space
- TIP: Relationships are important to teens, but so is their space. Try planning time spent together in advance, and be willing to let go of control and persuasion, and let the moments unfold naturally. This is how your teen likes to spend time, so meet them on their turf first, and they will come to you and open up.

Now that you've read this eBook you may be feeling better prepared to respond to the choices your teenager makes through life. Alternatively, this may have shed some light on some factors you weren't aware of and you're left with many questions...?

I am also aware that you could be curious to know more about Life Coaching for Young People?

There is lots of information back on my website that explains what "Youth Empowerment Coaching" is all about, and the benefits it can have for teenagers. I also coach parents like yourself, via my special "Coaching for Parents" program, and you can also read about that via the site.

From here, I will send you the occasional email (no more than once a week), with content, offers and more free downloads. Of course, you can unsubscribe at any time.

I hope this is the first step in a new journey for you and the young person in your life. Maybe we'll meet face to face one day. I hope so...

Till Next Time,

Brian McAleer

Head Coach / Director

**Brian McAleer Coaching Services**



## **BRIAN McALEER COACHING SERVICES**

***“Changing Young People’s Lives”***

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