

One of the biggest issues parents can face with older teenagers is knowing what to suggest they do. At this age, most young people are not as interested in activities they used to be or able to pick up something to do. They just are. The good news is they do grow out of it. But in the meantime, respect the fact that they do not wish to engage with you as much as they used to and that is ok, but keep the communication channels open.

Most young people want to spend their time with their friends, they feel grown up and want to be independent. In the better weather seasons it is easier as they can meet with their friends in the park, have a kick about or sit, chat and listen to music, chill out in town or go shopping, but equally they will happily spend their time gaming. Social media and online play is a huge aspect of their life and can be helpful as a release from the pressures of school or a way to escape from worries. Allow them the time to participate in online gaming but look at creating healthy boundaries.

At this age peer pressure is a large part of life and no young person wants to partake in activities which are not considered cool. However, there is still a part of them that does still enjoy other activities and family time so provide them with opportunities to become involved.

Sports & exercise



If they enjoy sports, look to get them involved in a local sports club. Not only will they get some exercise, but they can meet new people and socialise and it provides them with a different focus.

If they are not interested in a sports club encourage sports activities, if they like football, encourage a kick about with their mates or family members. If you have space get a goal post or a rebounder net or target goal where they can focus on a task and get outside. If they like basketball get a basketball hoop etc. Exercise is a good stress relief and exercise has been proven to release endorphins, helping improve one's mood which can be good for depression.

If sport is not their thing, they may like to do a simpler activity such as Yoga, dance, martial arts which can all be done in classes or at home.

Other activities to get your child outside and some fresh air include;

- Walking a dog (if you have one or an elderly relative or neighbours)
- Going for a bike ride, hike or walk in the fresh air
- Family activity days out

Life Skills



We look at this in a separate activity but help prepare your child for independence by providing them with different skills and opportunities away from online play, these could include:

Cooking – Encourage them to make dinner or help make dinner once a week, this will help them to learn the basics of cooking and nutritional eating. It can open up opportunities to chat to your child.

Bike maintenance – If they have a bike, can they change a tyre, check the breaks and chain etc.

Car maintenance – For when the bike turns into a car, teach them to check and top up the oil, check water levels, pump air in the tyres or change a tyre.

DIY – Get them involved in house maintenance or give them a project like woodwork, can they make a bench for outside. Get them proud of their achievements.

Socialise



Most young people like gaming for the social aspect as this helps meet one of their basic needs, helps them fit in and feel part of a community. Encourage this aspect but help them understand that it does not need to be inside and online. There are other ways to meet this need such as:

Organise an actual playdate, maybe don't use that wording but allow your child to invite some friends round for a pizza and movie night, a games night or a pamper night.

Arrange an activity day. It could be going to the cinema, a sports match or activity such as paintballing, laser quest, go ape, zip wires, wall climbing. Visit a theme park or water park or go bowling or ice skating.

These activities may cost money, but it can help teach them the value of money by allowing them to earn it by doing chores around the house, or give them a budget and get them to plan the day.

There are many activities available for young people to do and they will enjoy the freedom and chance to feel like grown ups with their friends. Remember they want to be around people or in a group of people so encourage these opportunities.

Making a difference



There are many opportunities and activities for young people to get involved in where they can learn new skills, qualifications or experiences which looks good on their CV and can help when finding work. These include;

- Join a local youth council or parliament <https://www.byc.org.uk/>
- Find a social enterprises or opportunity to make a social change <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust>
- Start making blogs for good causes
- Complete the Duke of Edinburgh Awards <https://www.dofe.org/do/what/>
- Complete course on the iDEA Programme <https://idea.org.uk/about>
- Volunteering in your local area
- Work at a local charity. Lots of charities are keen to get young people on board to help out with skills such as digital skills or for their social media.
- Some areas look for volunteers for festivals and local events

Some of these activities will differ depending on the area you live in. Getting your child involved in a new skill or community-based activity can help their prospects and build their network. Make sure they note down all the activities to add them to their CV.