

RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOUR

Risk-taking behaviour can have the worst possible consequences for adolescents: their lives can be put danger. It is uncomfortable to say 'no', but as your kids grow older, they will acknowledge that setting limits is useful.

Excitement

Excitement - it all involves risk! Adolescents (like many adults) often involve themselves in thrill-seeking activities so they can have fun or feel excited. Risk, however, does need to be calculated so that we can feel the excitement over and over again without actually coming to serious harm.

Their Own World:

Many young people see themselves as being unique and imagine themselves to be somehow invincible like heroes or pop stars. The flip side of this unrealistic thinking is that they can also see themselves as being ugly, fat, thin or stupid. Either way, the perceptions of themselves can be quite inaccurate and this may lead to overly risky behaviours. They may have sex with people they don't even like because they feel ugly and can't imagine anyone else being interested. They may also drive fast or 'play chicken' in cars. The way they see themselves and want others to see them stops them from accurately assessing the risks involved.

Peer Groups:

Peer groups are very important to the adolescent and how they view themselves often depends on the reactions of their friends. Peer groups can have a positive or negative effect on the adolescent.

What Parents/Caregivers can do:

Discern the risk:

Learn to distinguish where guidance is needed, which issues to take a stand on, and which to back away from. Look at your beliefs and discuss your concerns with a partner or friend. Trust your instincts!

Set limits:

It's important not to act as a tyrant. Use the minimum amount of muscle necessary in order to keep young people safe.

No discussion, No negotiation:

In taking a stand, it's important not to enter into discussions or negotiation regarding your children's safety. These limits should extend to; the people with whom your kid mixes, staying with people who are unsafe and, allowing yourself to have a voice if they are going to be passengers in an unsafe vehicle or with an unsafe driver.

Maintain the relationship:

Constantly seek to understand the world of your of your kids. The more that they see you understand their world and their reasons for behaving in a certain manner, the more likely it is that they will see you as being reasonable.

