

## Parenting Adolescents: Can you keep your cool?

Many parents worry about their children behaving badly or getting involved in dangerous activities as they approach the teenage years.

Although we can never totally protect our children, research already shows that a critical part of dealing with unacceptable teenage behaviour and protecting young people from risk-taking activities is the quality of their relationship with their parent, the boundaries set by parents, and the amount of involvement parents have in their children's lives. But even when parents do their very best in the love and care stakes, teenagers can present challenges that are difficult to deal with.

A new research project, part of a PhD study at Swinburne University, will try to identify how parental attitudes about how to parent influence children's behaviour. The study will explore some of the subtleties of how parental practices relate to teenagers' abilities to manage and control anti-social and self-destructive behaviours.

In a pilot study for this project, researcher, Kylie Burke surveyed 251 parents who were currently or had once parented an adolescent. She found that being able to step back from your own emotions may be a helpful strategy in parenting teenagers. For example, if parents could negotiate with their adolescent about potentially "risky" activities even when it made them feel anxious, they were more likely to retain good relationships with the adolescent and have some influence over what happens 'next time'. What's more, when parents were able to separate their emotions from their actions (a form of 'psychological flexibility') in situations like this, they reported parenting as more satisfying and rewarding and felt more motivated and capable about their ability to parent.

The next step in the research is to find out if this approach also has benefits for the wellbeing of teenagers. Does parental 'psychological flexibility' create better relationships between parents and children? Does it promote children's ability to manage their own emotions?

**Kylie needs parents and their adolescent children to participate in the research.** Parents will be asked to complete a survey about their child's behaviour, their parenting, the parent-adolescent relationship and how parents view the world. Their adolescent child will be asked to independently complete a shorter survey relating to his or her behaviour.

### Are you the parent of a 10–18 year-old child?

If you are the parent of 10-18 year-old child and interested in helping us learn more about parenting adolescents, here's how you can take part:

1. You complete the survey online (your child does not take part in this option). Complete the survey online: [Parenting Adolescents Survey](#)

AND

2. Ask your child to also complete the survey.

This research is completely **voluntary and confidential**. The survey will take **parents about 30 minutes** to complete and about **20 minutes for adolescents** to complete.

If you have any questions about the study, send an email to Kylie Burke: [kylieburke2@gmail.com](mailto:kylieburke2@gmail.com) or phone: 0402 512 798.