



TLC for teens

Spots, mood swings, body issues... mum Josie Golden guides us through the hormonal storm of parenting a teenager

I know a lot of parents think their teenagers are moody and impenetrable – and, OK, they can be. But I love that my three once-helpless youngsters have grown into fabulous people, despite the hormonal ups and downs. I don't miss the days of puréeing vegetables, nappy explosions or whispering to the pharmacist 'Help, my child's got worms...!'. But teenagers are a complex species, and they're dealing with countless new experiences, including sweaty armpits, breaking voices, raging hormones and the dreaded acne – and all this can result in behaviour that will push parents to the limit.

'If I want to slam my bedroom door, I will!'

Show me a teenager free from mood swings and I'll show you a Kardashian who doesn't take selfies. But keeping your cool amidst the slammed doors and sulky silences requires extreme willpower.

'The onset of adolescence means a rise in the production of sex hormones – testosterone and oestrogen – and

fluctuations in the feel-good hormones serotonin and dopamine,' says Janey Downshire, counsellor and co-author of *Teenagers Translated**. 'The brain undergoes a massive overhaul, and mood, focus, energy and behaviour are all affected. Your teen is en route to becoming

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a sexually active adult with an innate need to pull away from you,' she explains.

So that's the chemistry, but what about the fallout? 'Try not to drop into the "confrontation trap",' says Janey. And don't resort to a teen strop yourself

– I'd always respond to the insults my daughter Daisy, now 17, threw at me. Bad move. 'Instead, take "time out" from any heated conversation with a promise to finish it later, when you're both calmer. If your child is emotionally darting around, any tension will only serve to raise their anxiety levels,' Janey continues.

She also urges parents to be available for casual conversations (easier said than done when they rarely leave their bedroom!). My sister Michele recently found a way when she started driving her teenage son Tom to football training every Thursday. 'It's amazing how much you talk when there's no escape route!' she says.

Janey also suggests finding a day each week when you all sit down as a family to eat. Keep conversation light and deal with any tense moments in a low-key way. For instance, 'I understand that must be frustrating for you, but this is why we feel this way...' is a much better approach to any differences of opinion than to preach: 'In my day we used to...'. Sometimes, you may even have a good old chat. A lovely meal with my three – Daisy, Ben, 19, and Cecilia, 13 – is a great →

reminder that we do still all get on and love each other, despite the challenges!

'Help, my body's been taken over by an alien!'

It's not just teenagers' minds that seem to change overnight – it's also their bodies. And this can lead to extreme self-consciousness: I remember puffing up the stairs with a pile of washing and, as I got to Daisy's bedroom, she shrieked: 'Don't come in, I'm naked!' (This the same girl who, not that long before, would think it hilarious to dash, nude, along the landing to the bathroom yelling, 'Streaker!')

Of course, there's good reason for the shyness. They're dealing with hair sprouting, sweating, periods, and boobs and willies taking on a life of their own. But for any teens concerned they're developing too fast – or too slow – Janey advises giving matter-of-fact explanations of physical changes, and stressing we all develop at varying rates. (But do make sure they understand the facts: my friend Gloria's son, having been told the facts of life by his squirming dad, then innocently asked: 'When did you start your periods, Dad?')

But these days, with everything Snapchatted and Instagrammed, how can we get our kids to listen to us instead of comparing themselves with their peers? 'The pre-historic bit of their brain is driving them to seek safety within their peer group, not with you,' Janey says. 'Let them interact on social media or they'll feel even more isolated, but remind them that everything they share has consequences. What they



post at 14, they may not want to be reminded of as an adult. If they wrote a diary about their deepest secrets, they wouldn't want anyone to read that, so encourage them to apply that rule online.'

'OMG! That spot is even bigger than my nose!'

Few teens will go through adolescence with an unscathed complexion, and research shows that those with acne find it's the most difficult part of puberty. Leading dermatologist Dr Anjali Mahto explains it's all about those pesky hormones (again!). 'The male sex hormones in both boys and girls increase at puberty, as do the sebaceous

(oil producing) glands in the skin, so skincare needs to be targeted with that in mind,' she says. While acne is a medical condition (and there are various treatments available), you can help your teens keep minor spots and blemishes at bay with a twice-daily cleanse and moisturise routine. 'Choose a cleanser specifically formulated for acne-prone skin – these products often contain salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide – and look for gel-based moisturisers that are "non-comedogenic", meaning they help prevent the formation of blackheads,' adds Dr Mahto. 'If your teen insists on wearing foundation, encourage them to opt for an oil-free version.'

Boots nutritionist Vicky Pennington stresses that a balanced diet is also crucial for healthy skin. Time to wrestle that fizzy drink out of their hands and instill the '8-10 glasses-of-water-a-day' rule. 'Hydrated skin is healthy skin,' Vicky says. 'Even mild dehydration can leave skin looking dry, tired and grey.' And when it comes to food, it's all about colour. 'If they raid the fridge, make sure the snacks in there are healthy and attractive,' she continues. 'Vitamin A and zinc play a key role in keeping the skin healthy, so stock up on pumpkin, spinach, chicken, oily fish, eggs, yoghurt and nuts.'

So yes, there will be times when you feel like screaming, and when your teen appears to be strapped into a never-ending hormonal rollercoaster. But please remember that, as with potty training and worms, every drama is just a phase. Think of the bigger picture: there *will* be an end to slamming doors, dirty washing on the floor and crying over spots. And your children *will* like you again. Promise!

Blemish-busters for teen skin

New Boots Tea Tree & Witch Hazel Facial Wash **Boots Exclusive**
£4.29/429 points (150ml), contains natural extracts to help fight spot-causing bacteria.



With gentle micro beads to cleanse away dirt, Clean & Clear Blackhead Clearing Daily Scrub, £3.75/375 points (150ml), is a go-to exfoliator.



For a quick and easy way to cleanse a blemish-prone T-zone, pick up Bioré Deep Cleansing Pore Strips, £10.99/1,099 points (pack of 14).



Non-comedogenic and long lasting, the clever Vichy Dermablend Corrective Stick SPF30 in Nude, £15/1,500 points, can help to disguise spots and blemishes.

