

Parenting Pre-teens and Teenagers

Session 3

Co-problem solving



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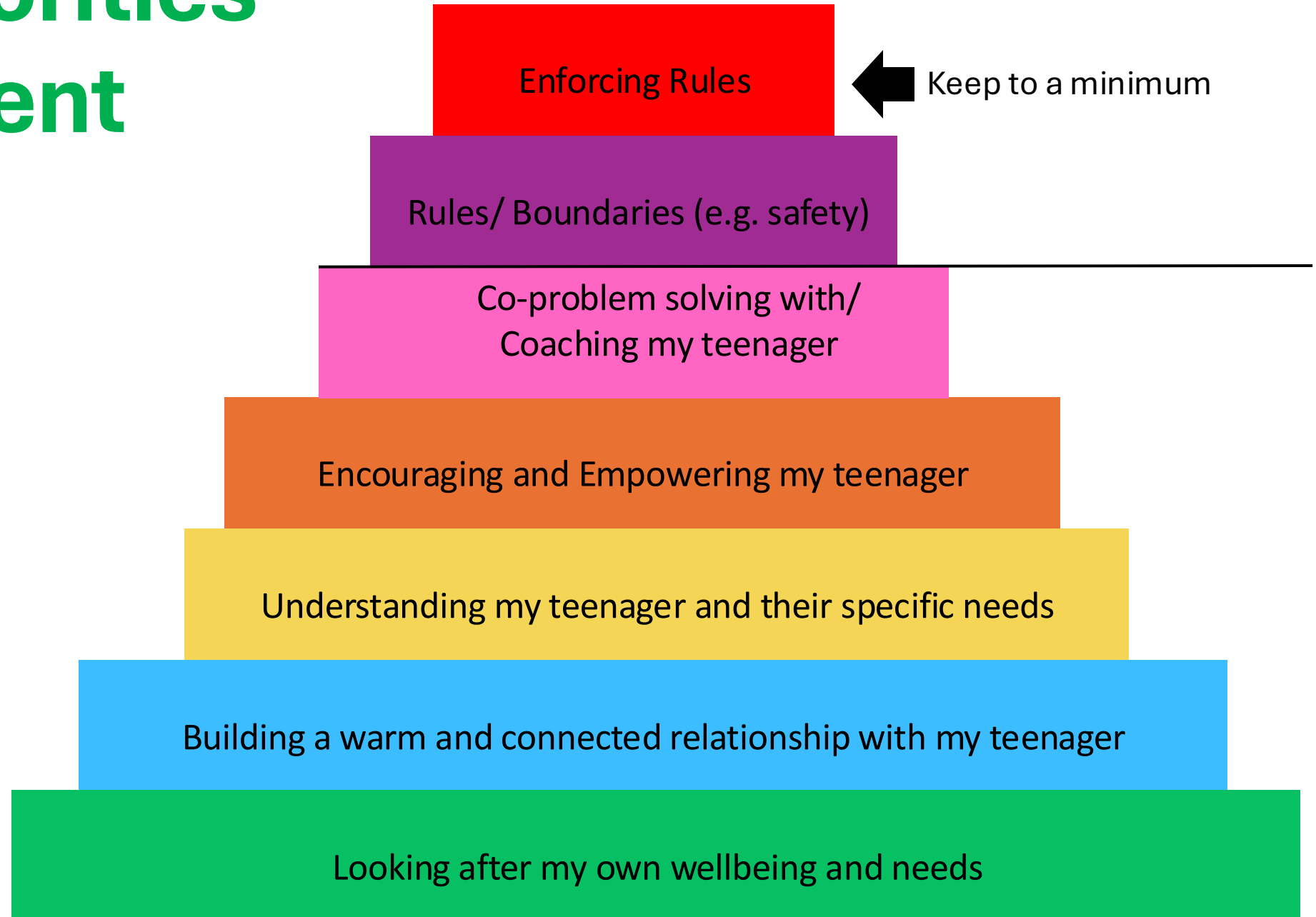
The Relationship Bank Account

**Increase Deposits and
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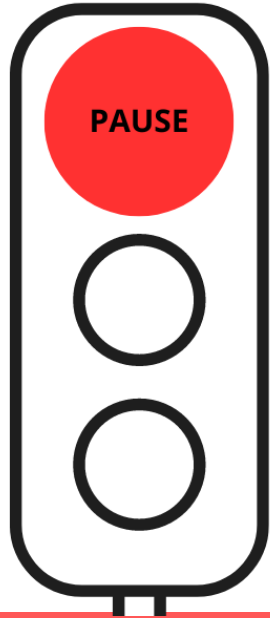
Make sure you are in credit!



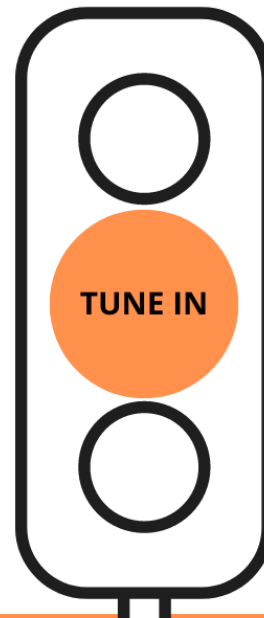
Your Priorities as a Parent



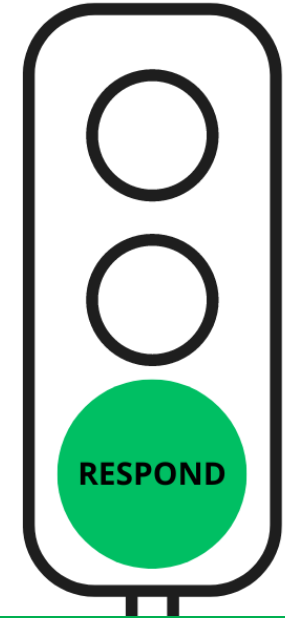
Solving Childhood Problems



- How am I **reacting** to the problem?
- What responses **work well** already?
- What responses make things **worse**?



- What is going on for my **child**?
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What is the best way to **respond**?

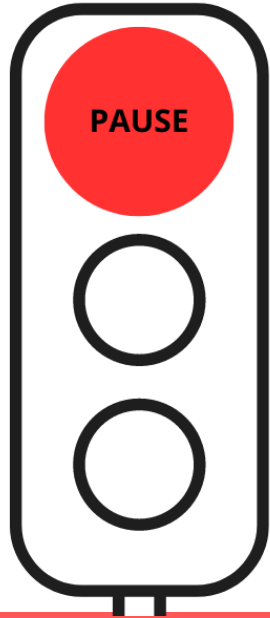
How can I **respond when the problem** happens?

How can I **prevent the problem** happening again?

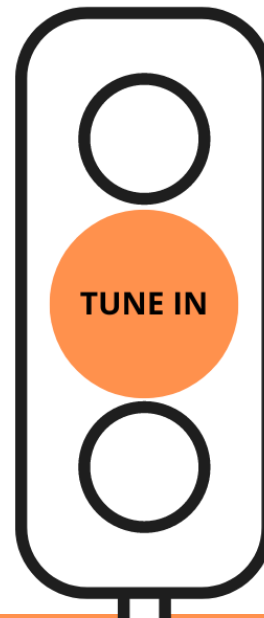
Session 2 Homework

1. Continue to make deposits in your relationship with your teen.
Find new ways to chat and **connect** with them.
2. Complete relationship checklist from handout
3. Press the **pause button** when faced by rows and arguments.
Respond calmly and empathically.
4. Identify an **ongoing problem**. (such as **sibling rivalry, screen conflicts and rudeness/ conflict**)
 1. Pause and stop reacting.
 2. Tune in to understand.
 3. Come up with a response plan.
5. Focus on **something nice** for yourself as a parent.

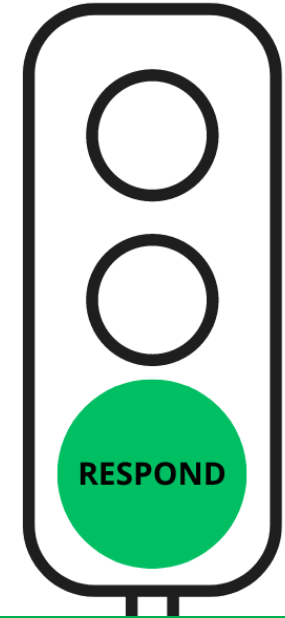
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Common Challenges



Meltdowns after school

Teen has 'big meltdowns' particularly after school particularly when any demands are put on them. Requests to do homework or tidy up can trigger a meltdown

The meltdowns can go on for hours with teen shouting and screaming

Tuning In: Meltdowns

- What is **going on for your teen**?
- What are the **triggers** ?
- What are their sources of stress?
- What **needs underpin** the meltdowns? (sensory needs, burnout, social stress, school challenges etc)
- How do you as a parent normally **react** ?

Prevention Plan

Meltdowns

- **Tune in** to your child - understand what is the issue for them and what **stresses** they might be under.
- Consider what **additional needs** your child might have - autism, dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia...
- Sit down and **co-problem solve** with your child. Listen carefully to them. Explore what might help?
- Have a relaxing **routine** after school, time in room, screentime. Reduce demands for a while
- Work closely **with school to** address stress: Ask for accommodations (e.g. movement breaks, break time activities)
- Get extra **professional help** as needed.
- Encourage your child doing **activities that they enjoy** and are good at - to build self-esteem...
- Set aside a **daily connecting time** with the child (which is study free).

Response Plan - Co-Regulation

Getting through meltdowns and de-escalating challenging situations by:

- being a **warm** and **calming** presence.
- being **close by** or **giving space** depending on what your child needs.
- showing you understand by your **body language**, tone of voice and what you say (or don't say).
- touching or **physically comforting** your child in a way that soothes them (or not touching them if that works better).
- reducing **sensory triggers** in the environment (dimming lights, turning TV off).
- creating a **safe environment** that relaxes your child (sitting on bean bag, putting on music, giving them a drink or a snack).



The Importance of Listening

- Listening is probably the **most important** way of giving your teenager positive attention.
- Builds their **confidence**.
- Helps your teen **express themselves** and **understand** their own **feelings**.
- Helps them understand the feelings of **other people**.
- Allows parents to **get to know** their teen and to really get close to them.
- Is the basis for helping children **solve problems**.



Are You Really Listening?

Teen comes to parent really upset:

- *“James just turned the TV over to his channel.”*

Parent replies:

- “Well, I’m sure it was his turn.” (**Arguing**)
- “You shouldn’t be watching so much TV.” (**Criticism**)
- “Why don’t you just do something else?” (**Advice**)
- “Oh don’t worry, it’s not so bad.” (**Coaching**)
- “Let me go and talk to James.” (**Rescuing**)



Active Listening

Active listening involves:

- **Genuinely** trying to understand.
- Stopping what you are doing and **attending**.
- Giving full attention via your **body language** and eye contact.
- Acknowledging what your teenager is **feeling**.
- Repeating what your teenager has said, to check you have **understood**.
- **Encouraging** your teenager to continue by nodding, being silent, repeating the last word they have said, asking gentle questions...



Active listening is reserved for special times such as high conflicts when your teenager feels really strongly about something.

Listening: Example

Teen comes to parent really upset:

- *“James just turned the TV over to his channel.”*

Parent replies:

- “Sounds like you are upset. Sit down and tell me what happened.” (picks up on **feelings** and **encourages** teen to say more)
- “I’m sorry, I know how much you like watching that programme.” (**acknowledges feelings**)



Breakout



- **Where** and **when** do you get a good chance to **listen** to your teenager?
- What helps them **open up** and talk to you ?

Problem-Solving in Families

Stages of Problem-solving

Step 1 - Pick a good **place** and **time** to talk.

Step 2 - Start **positive** and state **goal**.

Step 3 - **Listen** to your teenager – help them say what they think and feel.

Step 4 - State your **own point of view** respectfully.

Step 5 - Brainstorm **solutions** – ask your teen to come up with ideas **first**.

Step 6 - Agree a **plan** - try and find a ‘win-win’ solution.

Step 7 - Set time to meet again to **review**.



Pick a Good Time

- During the problem or in the **heat of the moment**
though may need to co-regulate first
- **A scheduled time**
“let’s talk after dinner or when we go for a walk.”
- When **child comes to you** about problem
you choose to drop tools and listen
- **Spontaneous opportunity**
e.g. when a dilemma comes up during a TV show you are watching



Becoming An Encouraging Parent



Critical Parent

“You are doing it all wrong.”



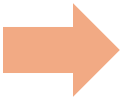
“How dare you shout at me.”



“Why are always fighting with your brother?”



“Don’t get angry like that!”



Encouraging Parent

“I can show you how to do it.”

“Shhh, please lower your voice.”

“I know you can get on with your brother.”

“You sound quite stressed at the moment
..tell me what is going on for you.”



The Best Way to Encourage

Affirm What Is Going Right

*"You got the books out,
that is a good start."*

Acknowledge Feelings

*"You look upset...
what's going on?"*

Affirm Positive Intentions

*"I appreciate you
trying to help."*

Express Belief

*"You can be so kind
to your brother."*

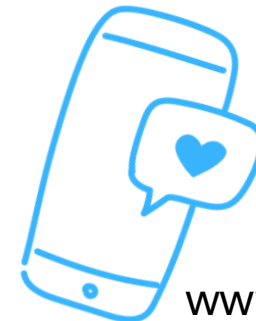
Make It Personal

*"It's a real help to me when
you clear the dishes."*

What Positive Qualities Do You Appreciate in Your Teen?

- ✓ idealistic
- ✓ great sense of humour
- ✓ caring towards his grandmother
- ✓ good with younger kids
- ✓ has great energy
- ✓ keeps me young
- ✓ quiet and deep thinker
- ✓ always gives an opinion
- ✓ challenges my ideas
- ✓ freer/ less inhibited than me
- ✓ great spirit and drive
- ✓ chooses good friends
- ✓ very chatty with people
- ✓ sensitive to other's feelings

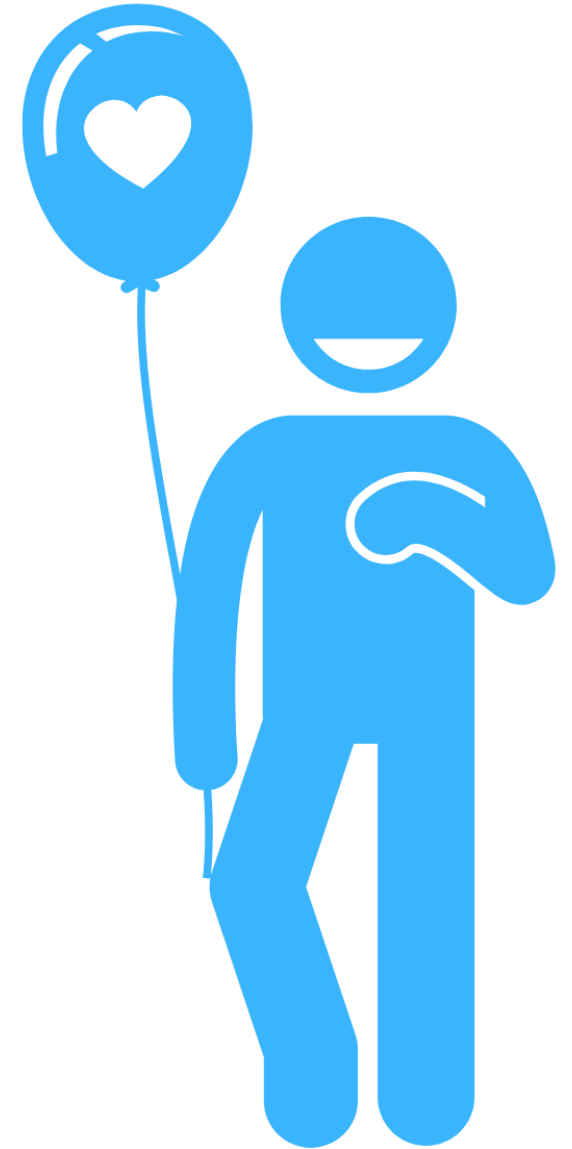
- What **other good qualities** do they have that you like?
- Write down an **encouraging message** you can give your teen about these qualities during the week, either in person or by text.



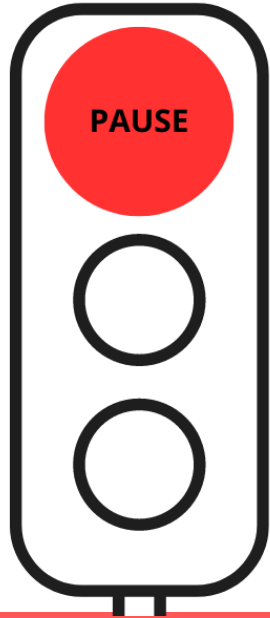
Encouraging Parents

just as your teenager needs you to see their positives you need to adopt this encouraging attitude towards yourself.

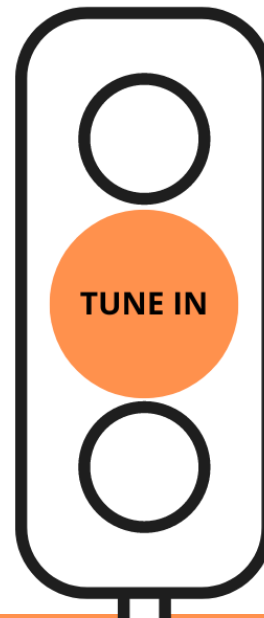
- What did I do **well** as a parent last week?
- What is something I did recently that I am **proud** of?



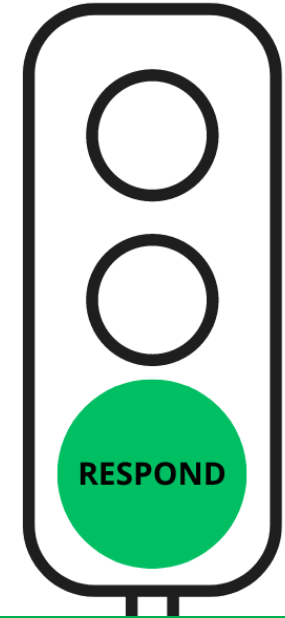
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What is the best way to **respond**?

How can I address my **child's needs**?

How can I address my **own needs**?

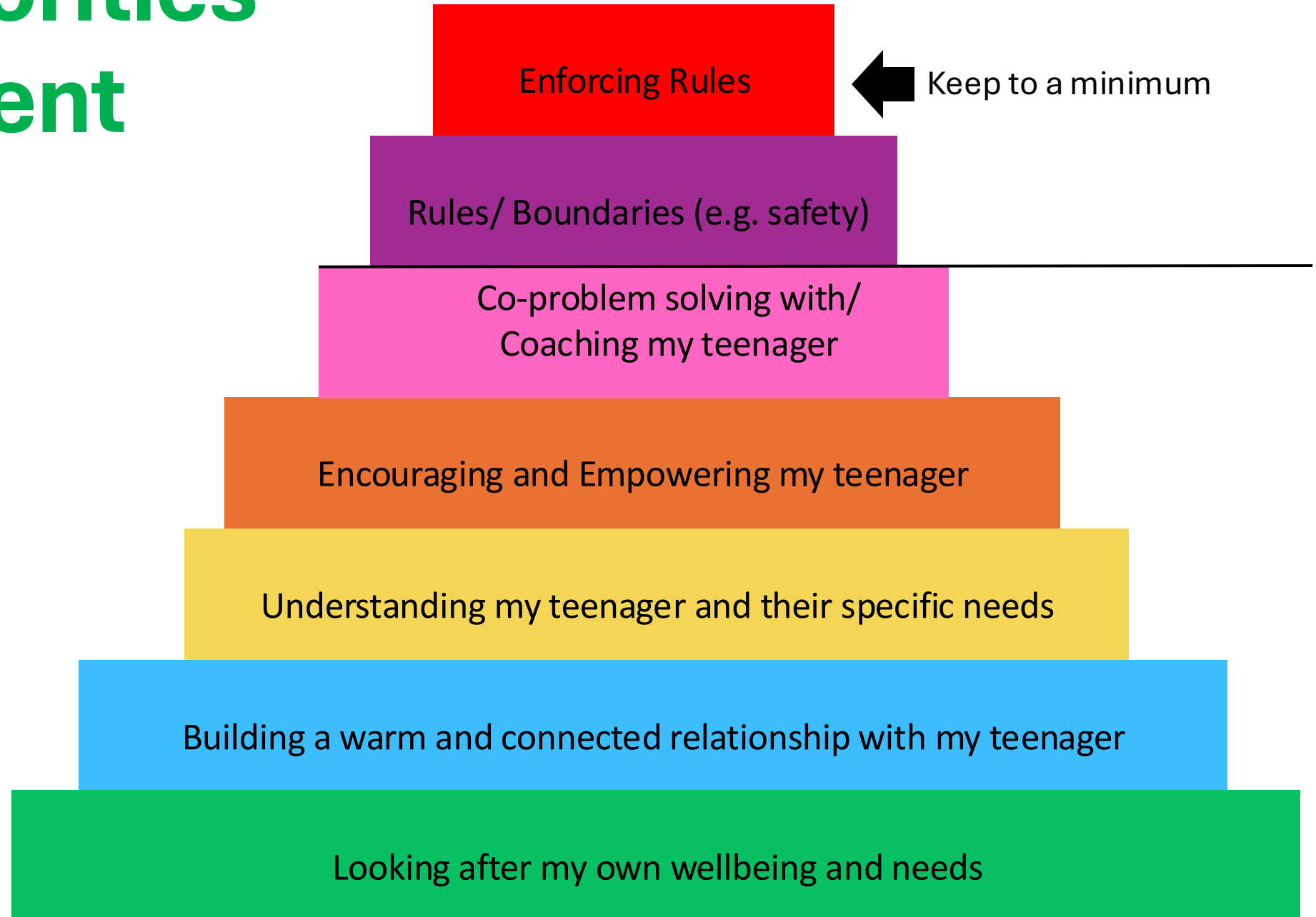
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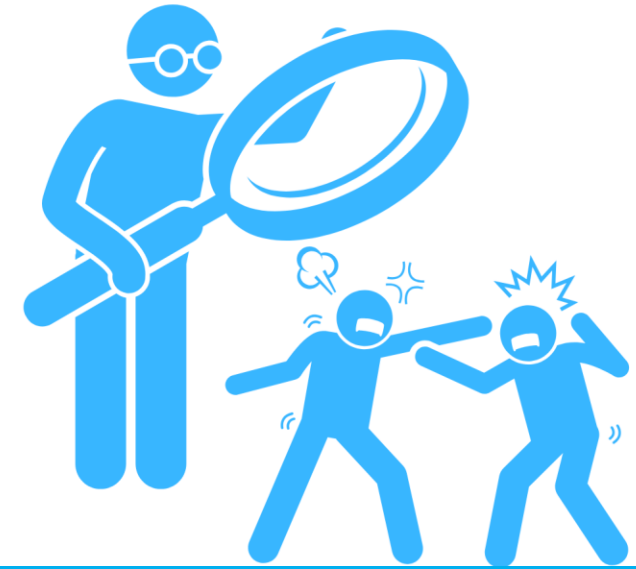
Your Priorities as a Parent



Further Support and Next Steps

- Look out for upcoming talks/courses in the newsletter and instagram page.
- If you think your child might be neurodivergent, there will be another 'Parenting Exceptional Children' course in coming months.
- Additional workshops on **'Understanding Motivation' 9th April** and **'Helping Children Manage Anxiety and Stress' 13th May**
- Longer version, Parents Plus 'Parenting Teenagers' course, check out www.parentline.ie/courses.
- Lots of articles on parenting teenagers on my website, www.solutiontalk.ie.

Common Challenges



Siblings Fighting

Two children are always fighting, constant tension in the house.

The older child seems to be always picking on the younger, which greatly annoys the parents.

They find themselves constantly refereeing the two of them.

The younger one often runs crying to the parent for help, who feel very angry at older child.

Tuning In: Siblings Fighting



- When there are ongoing sibling fights, the **core issue** is usually that one child feels that the parent loves the other child more.
- Many parents inadvertently reinforce this belief by **taking a side** in disputes.

Step-by-Step Response Plan

Sibling Rivalry



1. **Press pause** - When you hear them fighting, don't jump in immediately.
2. **Don't take a side** - Listen to both of their perspectives equally.
3. **Positive Instruction** - *"Listen guys, you need to sort it out yourselves."*
4. **Encourage** - *"Come on, I know the two of you can get on well together? ' Usually you can be such good brothers."*
5. **Co-regulate with both** - *"Let's all calm down/ let's take a break for a minute"*.
6. **Co-problem solve** - *"How can I help you sort things out?"*
7. **Use an equal consequence** - *"Look guys, if you continue to fight the TV will get turned off **or** you will have to go to your rooms for a minute to calm down."*
8. **Problem-solve** later if the situation is ongoing.

Prevention Plan

Sibling Rivalry



- **Co-problem solve together** - Sit down with both children and help them discuss ways they can get on. The focus is on finding a solution rather than analysing who is wrong.
- **Reflect about your relationship with each** - Do you inadvertently have a favourite/ get on better with one? Do you have different expectations for each due to differing needs?
- **Problem-solve individually** - Sit down with each child, without taking sides, listen to their perspective and help them find a solution - *“How can you get on with your sister?”* or *“I need your help managing your brother.”*
- **Build your relationship with each child** - Set aside one-to-one time with each child, when you can enjoy their company and listen to them alone.
- **Support their relationship with each other** - Set up play/connecting time with both children supporting them playing cooperatively together e.g. put them on the same team.
- **Encourage and affirm together** - *“You are great brothers sharing like that.”*
- **Always encourage both** - *“I put out the plates and B you did the cutlery.”*