

TIPS FOR Interviewing ADOLESCENTS

Younger Teens

- Use concrete language and expect concrete questions and answers.
- Provide help in identifying feelings.
- Be aware of their allegiance to friends and possibly conflicted dependence on parent.

Older Teens

- Treat the adolescent like an adult.
- Assess ability to think abstractly.
- Remember adolescent behavior can be very labile. One day they may seem very mature, responsible and upbeat, and the next day immature, childish and irresponsible. They may regress when under stress.
- Let the adolescent take primary role for his/her needs.

In General

- Address the adolescent
- Respect his/her privacy and confidentiality
- Withhold judgment
- Ask open-ended questions
- Take into account the adolescent's development level
- Listen for understanding, not truth
- Know the law(s) on consent and confidentiality

Communication Strategies

1. Reflect, don't ignore feeling.
2. Be honest—reveal hidden agendas.
3. Expressing empathy
4. Respect their needs.
5. Give the adolescent control over something
6. Explain the limits of confidentiality
7. Some reluctant teens may open up during the initial interview, some may not trust you for a couple of interviews, and few may never trust you—through no fault of your own.
8. Set a date, if follow-up appointments are needed.