The A to Z of Growing Up: a guide for homeschooling families

One topic a week from *The A to Z of Growing Up* gives your teenager a complete wellbeing and life-skills strand over two years, with nothing to prepare beyond reading the facilitator notes.

See also: *The A to Z of Growing Up: CAPS Life Orientation alignment, Grades 7 to 12*

Why it works at home

- **Ready to use.** Each topic explains an idea in plain language, then gives your teenager prompts to think and write about. The facilitator notes tell you what to discuss and what to watch for.
- **Two levels in one book.** Junior prompts suit ages 12 to 14 and senior prompts suit ages 15 to 18, so siblings of different ages can work on the same topic.
- **It fits any curriculum.** Use it as the Life Orientation strand if you follow CAPS (the separate CAPS alignment guide shows which grade and term each topic supports), or as a wellbeing and character strand alongside Cambridge or any other curriculum.
- **Photocopiable.** Copy a fresh worksheet for each child, or keep a clean copy to revisit a topic a year later.

Your role: parent and facilitator

At home you are both the person teaching the topic and the person your teenager lives with. That makes the conversations richer, and sometimes harder.

- **Guide, don't grade.** There are no right answers. Your job is to ask good questions and listen, not to correct what your teenager feels.
- **Share a little of yourself.** A short, honest story about your own teenage years makes it easier for them to open up.
- **Expect some topics to be about you.** Topics such as Boundaries, Relationships and Communication may bring up family life. Stay curious rather than defensive. It is a sign of trust that they told you.

A two-year plan

Start each year with *All About Me*, then take one topic a week. Each term has a theme of about ten topics, which leaves room for holidays and catch-up weeks. Year 1 builds the foundations; Year 2 goes deeper and suits a teenager of 14 or older.

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Year 1

Term	Theme	Topics, in order
1	Knowing myself	All About Me · Me, Myself and I · Identity · Unique Strengths · Quirks · Self-Worth · Values · Body Image · Youth: Growing Up · Brain
2	Feelings and coping	Emotions · Anger · Anxiety · Worrying · Stress · Coping Skills · Negative Self-Talk · Resilience · Mindfulness · Gratitude
3	Me and other people	Friendships · Belonging · Communication · Assertiveness · Boundaries · Trust · Empathy · Kindness · Bullying · Tech and Screens · Online Identity and Safety
4	Growing forward	Goals · Habits · Procrastination · Growth Mindset · Failure · Perseverance · Dreams · Career Calling · Purpose · You and Your Future Self

Year 2

Term	Theme	Topics, in order
1	Who I am becoming	All About Me (again) · Acceptance · Comparison · Confidence · Guilt · Gut Feeling · Integrity · Roots and Faith · Solitude · Self-Regulation · Zones
2	Harder feelings	Grief · Letting Go · Depression · Mental Health · Jealousy · Keeping Your Cool · Nerves and Nervousness · Negative Thoughts · Vulnerability · Inner Peace · Hope
3	Living with others	Relationships · Respect · Loyalty · Forgiveness · Apologising · Listening · Understanding Others · Diversity and Difference · Judgement · Open-Mindedness · Perspective · Digital Wellbeing
4	Skills for life	Healthy Choices · Sleep · Exercise · Financial Fitness · Working With What You Have · Decisiveness · Determination · Focus · Concentration · Tests and Exams · Future Self

Anytime topics

Use these in spare weeks, during holidays, or when the moment calls for them: Attendance · Excuses · Extracurriculars · Hobbies · Joy · Low Energy and Motivation · Optimism · Quest · Zest for Life.

The order is a suggestion. If your teenager is going through a loss, a friendship problem or exam stress, go straight to the topic that fits. Revisiting All About Me at the start of Year 2 shows them how much they have grown.

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Making it work at home

A weekly rhythm

Day	What happens	Time
Monday	Read the topic together and talk about what stands out	15 minutes
Wednesday	Your teenager works through the prompts on their own	20 to 30 minutes
Friday	An informal chat about one or two prompts: over a meal, on a walk or in the car	10 to 15 minutes

Side-by-side conversations, in the car or while cooking, often work better with teenagers than sitting face to face.

Privacy

Treat the workbook as your teenager's private journal. Agree at the start that you will not read their pages unless they invite you to, and keep that promise. The one exception is safety: explain that if you are ever worried they are in danger, you will step in. Teenagers write more honestly when they trust the page is theirs.

Siblings and multi-age learning

Siblings can do the same topic in the same week, each on their own level of prompts. Discuss the topic together, then give each child space to write privately. Some topics, such as Jealousy or Comparison, may be easier to discuss one-to-one.

Faith and family values

Roots and Faith, Values and Integrity invite your teenager to explore what they believe and why. Share your family's faith and traditions, and let them ask honest questions. A faith they have thought through is one they are more likely to keep.

Co-ops and support groups

Many topics work well in a homeschool co-op or support group, where teenagers hear that others feel the same way. Use the facilitator notes to lead discussion, and agree ground rules first: what is shared stays in the group, and no one has to share.

Records and portfolios

If your curriculum provider or registration requires evidence of work, completed pages can go in your teenager's portfolio. Ask them first, or keep a record of the topics covered and dates instead of the pages themselves.

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When to get help

The workbook helps teenagers name what they feel, but it is not therapy. Read the facilitator notes before Depression, Mental Health, Grief, Body Image and Boundaries, and contact a doctor, psychologist or counsellor if you notice:

- low mood or irritability most days for two weeks or more
- withdrawal from friends, family or things they used to enjoy
- changes in eating, such as skipping meals, bingeing or intense worry about weight
- signs of self-harm, or any talk of not wanting to be alive
- worry or panic that stops them from doing everyday things

If your teenager talks about wanting to die or hurt themselves, stay with them, take it seriously and get help the same day.

At home, your teenager may find it hard to tell you about something involving the family. Make sure they know at least one other trusted adult they can talk to, such as a relative, a faith leader or a counsellor, and the helplines below.

Service	Number	For
SADAG Suicide Crisis Helpline	0800 567 567	Suicidal thoughts and mental health crises, 24 hours
Childline South Africa	116	Children and teenagers in any kind of trouble, free and 24 hours
LifeLine	0861 322 322	Counselling for anyone in crisis

Copying the worksheets

- A family that buys the book may photocopy learner worksheets for their own children. The facilitator notes are for the parent and are not for copying.
- Co-ops, tutoring centres and tuition/support groups that copy pages for other families need a site licence: contact info@whatwaydsays.co.za.

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