

Dear David

You are not alone. Many teenagers can't communicate with their parents, especially about personal issues like sex and relationships. Parents need time to get used to the new person you are becoming, to understand and trust you as you question and learn and grow.

Try to understand that your parents care and worry about you, and want you to grow up safe, happy and successful. They remember from their own youth the temptations and dangers you face, and how easy it is to make mistakes. Life has become more scary since they were young, especially with AIDS. That's why they go on about what you mustn't do. Remember, they often have very good advice to offer.

You can improve your relationship with them. First, show them they can trust you. Keep to their rules. If you think they are unfair, talk to them about it. And listen when they advise you. Secondly, ask their opinions about your real problems. Tell them what you want from life too, so they'll know you better. Finally, always talk to them calmly and respectfully, never get angry or rude. If you start to lose your temper, suggest you talk later.

Keep trying – it's well worth the effort. And if this still doesn't work, talk to a teacher or a family friend.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Make a list of the things you like about yourself – such as your nice smile, special skills or strong character. Where did you get or learn these things? Could they have come from your family?

How does this exercise make you feel about your family's contribution to the way you think and feel?

- **ROLEPLAY:** In pairs, choose a common area of disagreement between parents and teenagers. Take turns to play the role of the parents in an argument, then tell the group what it felt like.
- In your groups, think of a world where parents and elders did not offer advice to youths and children. What would that world be like? Present your group's ideas in a drawing, play, song or poem.
- Make a date to talk to one or both your parents about something that worries you. Practise what you'll say first and remember what Auntie Stella said about staying calm, understanding and respectful.

