

Behavioural and Emotional changes



Puberty is a time where lots of changes happen.

This includes changes to how you feel and how you behave.

Your child might start to have a lot of different feelings that can change very quickly.

They might not always know how to manage their feelings.

They might behave differently.

It can be hard to know what type of different feelings and behaviours are normal for puberty.

This can also be hard if your child has different communication and support needs.





What is on this page?

This page has information on how to support your child when they have different feelings and behaviours during puberty.

It has easy read information on:

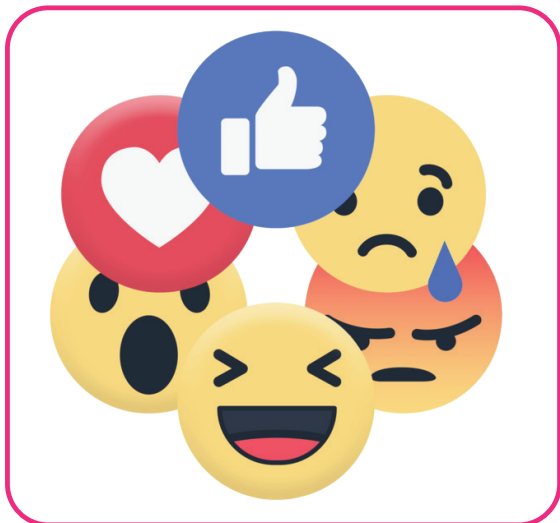
- what normal changes are
- things you can try to support your child with changes
- what to do if you are worried about changes



What are normal changes?

There are lots of different changes that happen to feelings and behaviour during puberty.

You can read about them below.



Feeling sensitive

It is normal to feel sensitive during puberty.

Your child might have a hard time with how their body feels while they grow.

They might also feel uncomfortable with new hygiene tasks like using period products, shaving or using deodorant.

To learn more about hygiene, go to: [Keeping the body hygienic.](#)

Their emotions might also feel stronger during puberty.

To learn more about feelings, go to: [Identifying and communicating how I feel.](#)



Looking for identity

Children can struggle to feel independent during puberty.

They might want to do things more on their own.

They might want to figure out who they are as a person.

Knowing who you are as a person is called your identity.

Your identity can include:

- what you like
- what you dislike
- your gender
- who you are attracted to



To learn more about gender and sexuality, go to: [supporting gender and sexuality](#).



Feeling lost

It is normal for children to feel lost or upset as they grow up.

They might be worried about fitting in with friends or what it means to be a grown up.

To learn more about helping your child to feel good about themselves, go to: [creating a positive self image](#).



Peer pressure

Your child might start to see more things in the media and online during puberty.

They might start to make new friends at school, activity groups or services they go to.



It is common for children to start to try out behaviours or words that are 'naughty' or inappropriate.

They might do this because it is fun or because it gets a reaction from other people.

They might also do things because they see other people doing it.

When your child does something because other people tell them to, it is called peer pressure.

Peer pressure can be very hard for children who don't feel included.

To learn more about supporting your child with health friendships, go to:

[Healthy relationships.](#)





Mood swings

It is normal for feelings to change quickly during puberty.

Feelings can also be bigger and stronger.

Your child might feel happy and then quickly become upset or annoyed at small things.

These are called mood swings.



These feelings might look very different to what your child was like when they were younger.

This can seem scary for children and parents.

To learn more about mood swings, go to: [Managing adolescent mood swings](#).



Feeling self-conscious

Your child might worry about changes to their body during puberty.

They might want to do more things on their own, like getting changed or going to the toilet.

They might want more privacy.

Your child might start to feel awkward or embarrassed.

Every child is different.

If this happens, it is good to think about how you can support your child to do more things on their own.

You can do this by teaching your child about public and private.





To learn more about public and private, go to: [Keeping Safe](#).

You can also support them to learn how to look after their bodies.

To learn more about looking after their body, go to: [keeping your body hygienic](#).

Developing sexy feelings

It is normal for children to be interested in private body parts and private behaviours when they go through puberty.

They might also start to have sexy feelings.

Sexy feelings can involve feeling attraction or wanting to touch private body parts.

This is OK.



This might feel scary for parents.

This is OK.

It is important not to make your child feel ashamed or embarrassed about sexy feelings.

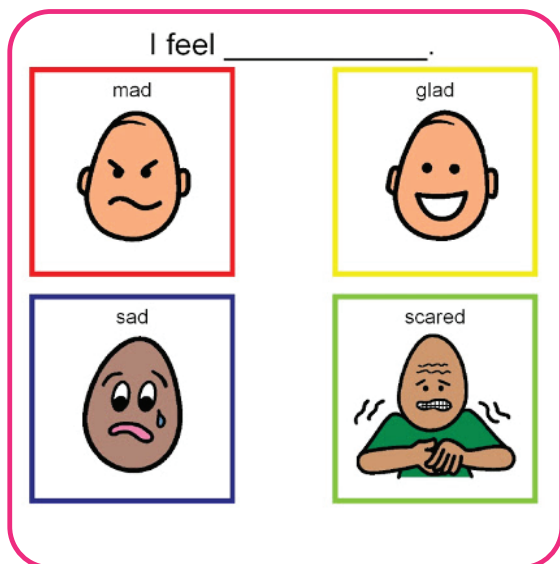
To learn more about sexy feelings, go to: [Developing sexual feelings](#).

Things to try

You can try some of the things below to help your child with changing feelings and behaviour.

Make emotions normal

You can help your child to know how they are feeling by using things like pictures, colours and faces to name different emotions.





It is important not to tell people to 'stop crying' or to 'calm down'.

This can make people feel like their feelings are wrong.

This is not OK.

To learn more about naming different feelings, go to: [Identifying and communicating feelings](#).



Make a sensory space

You can set up a safe space at home for when your child has big feelings.

This is called a sensory space.

A sensory space might have:

- music
- toys
- craft
- nice smells

A sensory space can be a safe place for children to relax or work out how they are feeling.



This is a useful thing for children who are non-verbal.

Show your child what healthy feelings are

It can be very hard to manage your reactions to big feelings.

It is important to show your child what healthy feelings look like, even when it is very hard.

You can do this by naming your own feelings.

You might say things like:

- I fell over and I feel upset. I'm going to have a cup of tea to feel better





- I feel sad because I dropped my drink on the floor. I'm going to clean it up and make another one, that will make me feel better!

This can help teach your child that it is normal to have emotions, but you can control how you react.



What to do if you are worried

If you are worried about your changes to your child's emotions and behaviour, you should talk to your GP.

It is important to remember that emotions and behaviour during puberty might not always make sense.

It is OK to not know how or why someone is having different emotions and behaviours.

It is important to help your child to communicate about feelings.

To learn more about communicating feelings, go to: [Identifying and communicating feelings](#).

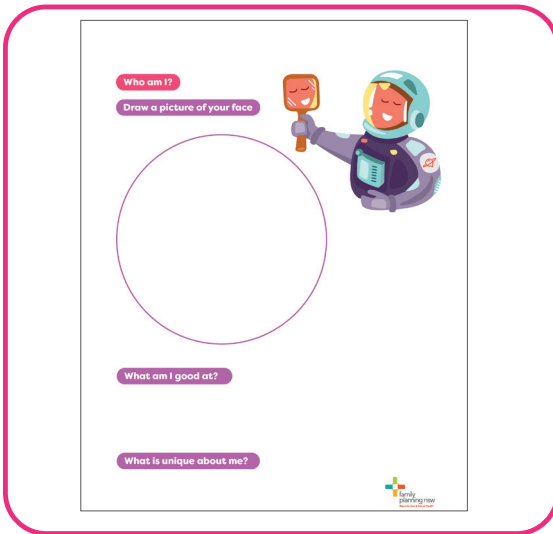
Resources for you to use

How do I feel?

Planet Puberty worksheet

<https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/How-do-i-feel-F.pdf>





Who am I?

Planet Puberty Worksheet

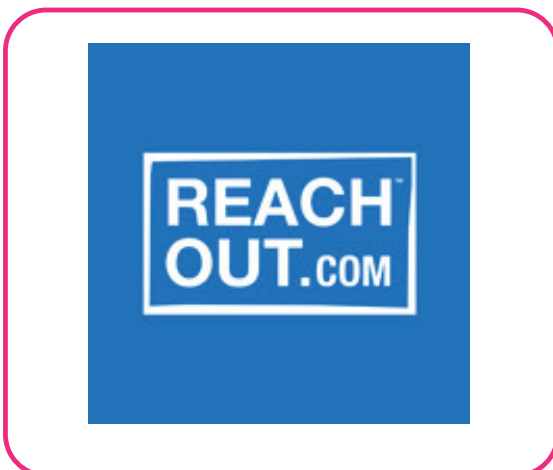
<https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Creating-a-positive-self-F.pdf>



MySigns

Documenting moods

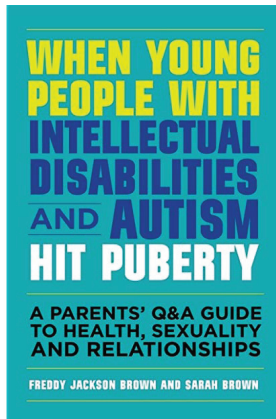
<https://www.mysigns.health/>



Tools and Apps for mental health

ReachOut

<https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps>



When Young People with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Hit Puberty

By Freddy Jackson Brown and Sarah Brown



Easy Read tool for building good mental health

Black Dog Institute

<https://www.healthymind.org.au/>



Mood Swings and Puberty

Kids Helpline

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/mood-swings-and-puberty>



What to read next:

- [Creating a positive self-image](#)
- [Communication and social skills](#)

For more information go to the
Planet Puberty website

www.planetpuberty.org.au