

## RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

Submissions must not exceed 300 words (excluding title & authors). The document **must not** be password protected or saved as read only as this may result in your abstract failing to upload successfully. Use Arial 12 point type only. Please structure your submission using the subheadings below. If the abstract does not fit the headings, please put full abstract beneath introduction and we will remove the headings once submitted.

### **The Rules of Engagement – How to Encourage Our Young People to Share Their Low Feelings: A Qualitative Investigation of How Teenagers Communicate Their Low Wellbeing.**

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#### **Background:**

Understanding adolescent wellbeing is a complex and nuanced challenge. This presentation explores who is best positioned to judge adolescent wellbeing, drawing on findings from a systematic literature review and qualitative research involving instant message interviews with adolescents.

Previous research highlights that:

Parents, particularly mothers, are more accurate in assessing observable and emotional domains of wellbeing.

Teachers' judgments remain underexplored.

Proxy reports are best used as supplementary information in service referrals.

#### **Methods:**

##### **Study 1:**

Following PRISMA guidelines, a systematic literature review synthesized research papers that assessed how well parents and teachers could appraise the wellbeing of their adolescent children and students.

This work was published in Children's and Youth Services Review, 2024

**Doi:** <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107343>

##### **Study 2:**

Using instant message interviews, the study prioritized authenticity, empathy, and ethical sensitivity. Adolescents gave insight into who and how they share their low feelings. Following a semi-structured interview guide, the lead researcher was given insight into how young people communicate their low feelings.

#### **Results:**

Adolescents selectively manage how they share their low feelings, both verbally and nonverbally. Parents can encourage openness by creating a supportive environment. Key guidelines for parents include:

1. Accept disclosures without judgment or emotional reactions.
2. Maintain privacy and respect boundaries.
3. Avoid unsolicited solutions.

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Mothers are often preferred confidants, but emotional responses can hinder disclosure.

Friends provide a safe space for expressing low well-being.

Teachers benefit by observing young people interacting with peers, where they will be less likely to suppress the nonverbal cues of low feelings – they have the benefit of seeing signs of distress.

### **Conclusion:**

Adolescents choose who and how they share their feelings.

Friends are the most trusted confidants.

Parents can foster disclosure by respecting the adolescent's rules of engagement.

Teachers have unique observational access but need support in interpreting cues.

Quiet adolescents require intentional strategies for identification and support.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

By acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.

There are no disclosures of conflict of interest to note concerning this work.

The lead author and noted presenter completed this research as part of the requirement to complete a PhD doctoral thesis. Co-authors are the supervisors guiding and supporting this work.