

# Adapt to changing times, parents urged

**PETALING JAYA** — Parents should change their parenting skills to adapt to the changing times, say psychologists.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) clinical psychology lecturer Hilwa Abdullah said this was because teenagers were now more mature and exposed to more information.

“Parents need to modify their parenting skills and approach their children as friends so they can open up more,” she said.

“This will improve communication rather than the authoritarian approach.”

She said they needed to be more creative to find a balance between being parents and friend.

On the case of Nur Amirah Atirah Abdul Majid, Hilwa said the 14-year-old could have faked her abduction to run off with her boyfriend because of the lack of communication between her and her parents.

She said teenagers had a “delicate psychosocial emotion” and would usually find outsiders or outlets outside the home if they did not get enough love at home.

Hilwa said parents should spend more time with their teenagers to observe any tell-tale signs of social problems.

“They could be more distant from parents and family members and spent more time outside. These teenagers might also have a drop in academic

performance,” she said.

She said parents should not buy gadgets for their children to make up for less time with them, as it could also have negative effects on their communication skills.

“Instead, parents should take responsibility and know your child emotionally,” she said.

UKM psychology lecturer Dr Suzana Mohd Hoesni agreed parents have to connect with their children.

“Begin when they are small and never stop. Parents need to keep an open mind and allow discussions,” she said.

Suzana said teenagers developed physically quickly once they approached puberty but were still developing cognitively.

“Decision-making influences mood swings. Parents need to understand that and take the initiative to help their children,” she said, adding that monitoring online usage and school activities were also important.

Suzana said parents also needed to find work-life balance and recuperate to function well as parents and show good examples in relationships.

She reiterated Hilwa’s view, adding that researches showed many teenagers from broken homes or less-loving family environments might turn to outsiders they could rely on or who they perceived as loving them more.