

TEEN DEVELOPMENT

Children grow through developmental stages. There are different social-emotional tasks unique to each developmental stage. The teenage years are probably the most difficult for the parent and the teen. We adults must understand not to take much of the conflict personally; the conflict is part of the normal development, not necessarily an indication we have failed.

- ✓ Teens are preparing to separate from their family. Become an individual with their own beliefs, values and understanding of how things work. They do **not** want to be “a chip off the ol’ block,” as they may have during younger years.
- ✓ Rebellion gives the teen the energy to initiate this separation process. A teen challenges rules and family beliefs as a way of establishing their own identity. Conflict and confrontation work.
- ✓ Teens may be rude or make fun of parents and other authority figures. They do not want to be with you where they can be seen by peers and thought to be still “beholden” to the adults. To the teen defiance expresses autonomy (independence, self-rule); they don’t want to look like they need parents. (Way down deep parental love and support is as important as it ever was! They just don’t want anyone to know it, even you!)
- ✓ Inside the teen there is confusion about wanting to grow up; on the outside they are already there, in their mind. Push come to shove, they are scared. (Probably most of the time it is not good for them to know you know this about them.)
- ✓ Hormone changes results in mood swings, more sensitive to your comments, flare-ups today where they would not have before, inappropriate laughing and giggling, need for risk taking and physical activity.
- ✓ Teen peer relationships become a lot more intense. Acceptance by the group, a group means everything. Being like their peers means they are different from you.
- ✓ Opposite sex relations become complicated. Now romantic feelings are where friendships used to be. These feelings are intense and felt to be the “most significant thing to ever happen to them.” Thus the rejection, competition for someone’s love, hurt, preoccupation,(obsession)...is intense.
- ✓ Teens have an increased need for privacy. Privacy means control and independence. They need to test things out without parental input. Violate their privacy and you will pay for it. (Exception: their safety is paramount. If you have reason, good reason, to suspect drug, alcohol, suicidal behaviors, dangerous choices then you have to act. DO NOT act without just cause.)
- ✓ Teens act all-knowing, all-powerful yet down deep there are insecurities and fear of failure. They work hard at not letting others see this.
- ✓ **Your relationship with your teen is different now. Less control, more negotiation. “I will treat you as responsible as you behave.” Absolutely hold them responsible for their choices; it is the only control you do have. Most teens will step up to the plate when you trust them. If they blow it, come down like a ton of bricks. Dr. Phil: “Avoid conflict with your children (except for safety negotiate and compromise); but when conflict is necessary, never lose.**