

A Time of Great Change & Transition for Both Teens and Parents



1. **As your child transitions from childhood to adulthood**, he/she will undergo many physical, emotional and behavioral changes. Parents are often worried or confused by changes in their teenagers.
2. **Each teenager is an individual** with a unique personality and special interests, likes and dislikes.
3. **Every teen develops at his or her own speed.** The tasks and skills the teen masters can indicate what stage he/she is in. Different teens of the same age can be expected to be at different developmental stages.
4. **Teen development can be divided into three stages: early, middle and late adolescence** with each stage having a series of tasks to face. You may find the **Child Development Institute** site helpful at http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/teens_stages.shtml. Some teen development tasks are:
 - ◆ **Moving towards independence.**
 - ✧ Struggle with sense of identity: they may feel awkward or strange about one's self and one's body, their interests and clothing style are influenced by their peer group.
 - ✧ As young people move towards higher education, or into the job market, it is critical for them to learn how to advocate (speak up) for themselves.
 - ✧ Parents are needed for emotional, material and information support. At the same time, they need to allow teens enough room to develop their own sense of identity.
 - ✧ A teenager's quest for independence is normal development and need not be looked upon by the parent as rejection or a loss of control.
 - ✧ Parents can expect their teen to test rules and limits. Maintaining open lines of communication and clear, yet negotiable, limits or boundaries may help minimize major conflicts.
 - ◆ **Meeting Basic Needs.** Questions about how to make a living, how to manage time and how to plan meaningful activities. Young people have a strong need for:
 - ✧ Community.
 - ✧ Having a sense of meaning in life.
 - ✧ Physical and emotional security; basic structure in relationships and living.
 - ◆ **Coping with Stress.** The emotional and social changes teens experience can make it hard to cope with barriers they encounter in the education system and job market.
 - ✧ Coping with stress is linked to other skills, such as problem-solving and self-confidence.
 - ✧ Strategies for stress management include relaxation techniques, managing 'self-talk', focusing, using support systems, and active decision-making and planning.
 - ✧ Friends provide emotional support, but this is a time when friendship patterns are changing.
 - ✧ Parents are usually the first to recognize a problem with emotions or behavior. An honest open talk about feelings can often help. Parents may choose to consult with the child's physicians, teachers, members of the clergy, or other adults who know the child well and, if needed, seek a specialist.
 - ◆ **Information and Information Access.** Young people need up-to-date information on careers, education programs and market trends. They must also develop skills to assess the importance of the information.
5. To help with these changes, young people need to establish a sense of purpose and understand how they are meeting their current and future needs. School counselors, peer counselors and mentors can help clarify these issues. This type of help can build resilience and make it easier at school and work.