

# Adolescence: A Time of Great Changes for Both Teens and Parents

Transition Skills, Tips & Tools  
Adolescent Development



**As you transition from childhood to adulthood**, you will undergo many physical, emotional and behavioral changes. You may be worried or confused by these changes.

**You are an individual** with a unique personality, special interests, likes and dislikes.

**You'll develop at your own speed.** The tasks and skills you master tell what stage you are in. Teens of the same age are often at different developmental stages.

**Teen development can be divided into two stages: young teens (12 to 14 years) and teenagers (15 to 17 years).** Each stage has a series of tasks to face. You may find the **ACT (Assets Coming Together) for Youth Center** site helpful at [actforyouth.net/adolescence/](https://actforyouth.net/adolescence/). Some teen development tasks are:

- **Moving toward independence.**

- It is common to struggle with your sense of identity. You may feel awkward or strange about yourself and your body. Your interests and clothing style are often influenced by your peer group.
- As you move toward higher education or into the job market, it is important for you to learn how to advocate (speak up) for yourself.

- **Meeting basic needs.**

You may have 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, i.e., having a basic structure in relationships and living.

- **Coping with stress.**

The emotional and social changes you experience can make it hard to cope with challenges at school and at work. Coping with stress is linked to other skills, such as problem-solving and self-confidence.

- Ways to lower stress 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.
- It helps to talk about your feelings. You may choose to talk with your doctors, teachers, members of the clergy, or other adults who know you well. If needed, you can also find a specialist such as a counselor.

- **Information and information access.**

You will need up-to-date information on careers, education programs and job trends. You will also need to develop skills to assess the importance of the information.

As you get older, you will still need your parents for emotional, material and informational support. At the same time, your parents should allow you enough room to develop your own sense of identity.

A teenager's quest for independence is normal and should not be seen by the parent as rejection or a loss of control.

Parents can expect their teen to test rules and limits. Keep open lines of communication clear and negotiable. Limits or boundaries may help lessen major conflicts.

Parents are usually the first to recognize a problem with emotions or behavior.

Parents can help with these changes by helping their teen find a sense of purpose and understanding of 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.

## **We're here to help.**

To learn more about the Division of Specialized Care for Children's programs and services, check out our website at: [dsc.uic.edu](http://dsc.uic.edu)

