

Understanding Teenagers

Teenagers are best described as part time adults and part time children – and THEY decide which part-time is when !

It is sad but true that the word used most often when discussing about teenagers is “problem”. Teenagers are not problems. They are like the partially cooked food which may burn if you touch it, which may look revolting in the pan, which may let out steam, but given the right flavoring, patience, and sensitive handling, soon turns very appetizing.

One of the first things to remember when a child enters adolescence is that the parent or the teachers need to grow up with him. Attitudes have to change, disciplining methods have to be revised, and he needs to be given greater autonomy, responsibility and independence.

Today’s teenager has a strong exploratory sense. From TV and internet to relationships and values, she starts questioning everything and wants to break traditions. Her curiosity needs to be nurtured, not suppressed. Peer pressure is very high at this stage, and anything contrary imposed by parents or teachers can create tremendous conflict at home or in school.

Successful completion of adolescence takes place when the person finds his identity and purpose, particularly in 3 areas: *Academics/career, relationships, sexuality.*

A few tips on handling teenagers:

- ❑ Do not mix up studies with his need for recreation, exercise and enjoyment. Never put down his “achievements” in areas he is proud of
- ❑ Never reprimand or insult him in front of his peers, and do not talk bad about his friends unless you have specific knowledge of some bad deeds.



- ❑ Do not ask probing questions (he will bluff his way through very successfully)
- ❑ Give reasons when you lay down rules. Answer the “why?” as far as possible.
- ❑ Be consistent in laying down norms. Do not change from time to time.
- ❑ As far as practicable, give choices when giving instructions, and frame your orders with a “Would you like to?”
- ❑ Do not make threats of punishment unless you can implement them. Punishment should be immediate, constructive, for the action and not against the child.
- ❑ Understand that his outwardly expressions do not necessarily imply lack of morals or values. Deep down inside there is an innocent child yet.
- ❑ Allow him to keep to the latest fads, unless it is wrong on principle. Do not impose norms which you were subjected to as children. Never begin a sentence with “When I was your age”
- ❑ Maintain open communication channels, wherein he can share and talk about any subject without hesitation.
- ❑ Encourage him to ask questions, especially on delicate subjects such as sex, family relationships, finance, etc.
- ❑ Ask yourself whether you are comfortable with the above subjects before you can discuss them with the adolescent.
- ❑ Finally, don’t worry too much. Eventually he will find a direction to his life. Many teenagers who seemed to be going off track eventually become very successful in later life.

The best way to deal with a teenager is to mentally become one, and start a new life all over again. It’s very enjoyable!