



Because I Love You™

Parent and Youth Support Groups

NORMAL ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT: Middle School and Early High School Years

Parents are often worried or confused by changes in their teenagers. The following information should help parents understand this phase of development. Each teenager is an individual with a unique personality and special interests likes and dislikes. However, there are also numerous developmental issues that everyone faces during the adolescent years. The normal feelings and behaviors of the middle school and early high school adolescent are described here:

Movement Towards Independence

Struggle with sense of identity

Feeling awkward or strange about one's self and one's body

Focus on self, alternating between high expectations and poor self- concept

Interests and clothing style influenced by peer group

Moodiness

Improved ability to use speech to express one's self

Realization that parents are not perfect; identification of their faults

Less overt affection shown to parents, with occasional rudeness

Complaints that parents interfere with independence

Tendency to return to childish behavior, particularly when stressed Future Interests and Cognitive Changes

Mostly interested in present, limited thoughts of future

Intellectual interests expand and gain in importance

Greater ability to do work (physical, mental, emotional) Sexuality

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Display shyness, blushing, and modesty

Girls develop physically sooner than boys

Increased interest in the opposite sex

Movement toward heterosexuality with fears of homosexuality

Concerns regarding physical and sexual attractiveness to others

Frequently changing relationships

Worries about being normal Morals, Values, and Self-Direction

Rule and limit testing

Capacity for abstract thought

Development of ideals and selection of role models

More consistent evidence of conscience

Experimentation with sex and drugs (cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana)

Teenagers do vary slightly from the above descriptions, but the feelings and behaviors are, in general, considered normal for each stage of adolescence.

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