



Tuning In To Your TEENS



Child Abuse Prevention Project

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Adolescence is the stage in a child's life that is marked by confusion. Rapid growth and sexual maturation combine with an ever increasing need to be independent from parents. Hormones have more control of teenagers' moods than they do.

- Young people at this stage have a strong sense of fairness, and they become very judgmental if adults or peers do not do what is "fair."
- A deep need for love and acceptance by parents and peers is typical, but often teens hide such needs in an effort to act grown up.
- Annoying habits such as refusal to wash, poor manners, and untidy dress are normal ways in which children try to become independent.
- A physical need for extended periods of rest is normal. Often parents think sleeping late on weekends and during school breaks are a sign of laziness, but most young people need more rest during this stage than at any other stage since infancy, and too little rest can result in moodiness.
- While few will admit it to parents, young people at this stage find security in structure. When setting and enforcing rules, keep the following in mind: When a rule is presented, explain the reason for it in twenty five words or less. The risks and consequences of breaking the rule should be made clear along with exactly what is not allowed.
- Recognize that their appearance is their own problem and set strict standards only when it's very important to you.
- Try to be cheerful and ignore teen moods as much as you can.
- Make sure your expectations are reasonable and praise your teenagers when they do well.
- When you hear, "I'm the only one who has to ..." check out the rules with other parents. You are not the "meanest parent in the world"! Think about how you felt when you were a teen and remember the scary and confusing feelings you had.
- Make sure each rule is reasonable, clear and enforceable. If one of those characteristics is missing, the potential for conflict increases.
- There is a difference between giving advice and listening. Sometimes, because as parents we want to be helpful to our young people, we get the two confused and our kids call it "lecturing" or "nagging" and tune us out. Ask, "May I make a suggestion about that?" If they answer, "Yes," you'll really have their attention.
- As teenagers get more outspoken and independent, many parents begin to feel less important and feel they are "losing" their son or daughter. It's okay! The need for distance from family and closeness with friends is part of healthy development.

