

## ADOLESCENCE

### KEY POINTS

#### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Examples of typical teenage “angst” (distress) are shown in this program, followed by comments on how parents might handle it best. Listings of things parents should look out for are offered, and some characteristic but puzzling behaviors are detailed, with comments on what’s prompting them. Some of the behaviors that show up in youngsters as early as 12 and as late as 20 often baffle parents, until the parents and child work things out.

#### MAJOR MESSAGE

Adolescence is a time of turbulent changes in children, usually starting at 12 or 13, though there’s no real set “developmental stage” for the period of adolescence. Changes in the child are profound, and inevitably result in a change in the parent-child relationship - a fact which disturbs many parents. Parents should:

- (1) maintain an open line of communication with the child,
  - (2) define rules, privileges and consequences,
  - (3) be consistent and firm about administering the rules, and
- try to be calm, patient, and loving throughout the **stormy period** of adolescence.

#### WHILE VIEWING

Watch for an example of how parents, along with their teenager, **PRAC-TICE** ways a problem can be handled.

#### REFLECTIONS

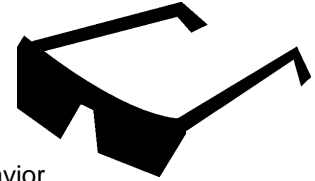
Focus for a few moments on the content of the video. Having thought about the points that were made about “adolescence”, decide which one **YOU** think is **THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR A CHILD**. Discuss this with friends or a discussion group.

The video presents a number of significant facts about adolescence:

- Adolescents tend to identify with a peer group. Status in the peer group is all-important (can be a negative factor).
- Adolescents depend on you to provide a model of behavior/attitudes. Avoid power struggles if possible.
- Changes are physical, sexual, and psychological: minor concerns become **MAJOR**.
- Parents must be sensitive to child’s feeling & self-image.
- Teens need guidelines and rules **DESPERATELY**.
- Teens’ abilities to manage tough situations are often weak. **PRACTICE** kinds of problems and ways teens can respond to them effectively.
- Child’s involvement is expanding beyond the home: respect this but try to maintain close ties.

Warning signs of developing problems (the teen starts to exhibit the following):

- Impulsiveness
- Boredom
- Violent behavior
- Declining grades
- Wearing sunglasses
- Withdrawal
- Shoplifting or other minor but bad behavior



How parents react to adolescents is very important: focus on the **PROBLEM** (not side issues). Convey that your help is available. Realize that you **MAY** have contributed to the problem, somehow.

Steps to take in solving the problem (may take more than one attempt or session):

- (1) Choose a time free of distraction.
- (2) Remain calm.
- (3) Demonstrate by word and actions that you’re competent to deal with **WHATEVER** the problem is.
- (4) Be alert to non-verbal signals.
- (5) Be prepared for emotional outbursts from the teen.
- (6) Never pressure the teen.
- (7) Avoid negative or moral responses.
- (8) If you sense the teen’s stress is major, help him/her express feelings.
- (9) Be aware the problem may be only the tip of the iceberg.
- (10) Possibly get help from a 3rd person.

Some things to keep in mind are to

- (1) let teens learn by their mistakes;
- (2) be firm with the teen and “let the consequences fit the crime”;
- (3) set reasonable limits and apply suitable consequences;
- (4) offer sex education early and sensibly, and set values such as respect for others and for oneself within your household. Though adolescence is a difficult time, parents must begin to “let go.” The relationship is taking a natural turn.

It’s best if the parents begin to prepare children **EARLY** for the difficult time of adolescence by setting rules and consequences and administering them with calm authority, consistently, from infancy onward.

