

# Helping Your Teen Survive Adolescence

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# Think Back to Your High School Years

What do you remember about your.....

- Physical appearance
- School experience
- Interactions with parents
- Interactions with friends
- Interests
- Sexuality and romantic relationships

ADOLESCENCE IS A TIME OF CHANGE AND TRANSITION

**Normal** (whatever that is)  
**Adolescent**  
**Development and**  
**Behavior**

# Physical Development

- Rapid gains in height and weight  
 $m=4.1\text{in./yr.}$     $f=3.5\text{in./yr.}$
- Development of secondary sex characteristics
- Continued brain development

# How Those Changes Effect Teens

- Sleep longer
- May be more clumsy
- Girls may worry about weight
- May worry about rate of development
- Awkwardness in showing affection to same sex parent
- More direct questions about sex
- Moody, impulsive, poor judgment

# Cognitive Development

- Advanced reasoning skills (What if?)
- Abstract thinking skills (faith, trust, beliefs, morals, values, etc.)
- Meta-cognition (planning, evaluation, organizing, etc.)

# How Those Changes Effect Teens

- Heightened level of self consciousness  
(imaginary audience)
- “No one else has ever felt this way”
- “It can’t happen to me”
- Difficulty with the “gray” in life, inconsistencies, error, etc
- Cause oriented

# Psycho-Social Development

- Identity (influential others are important)
- Autonomy (independence vs. interdependence)
- Intimacy (friendships that are open, honest, caring and trusting to romantic relationships)
- Sexuality
- Achievement (What am I good at?)



# How Those Changes Effect Teens

- More time spent with friends than with family
- More questions about sexuality
- Privacy
- Multiple and change in interests
- Secretive
- Argumentative
- Don't want to be seen in public with parents
- See and attempt to treat parents as equals

# When to be Concerned

# Possible Warning Signs of Depression

- Loss of interest in interests
- Feeling sad, blue, down in the dumps
- Feeling slowed down or restless
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Drop in school performance
- Changes in appetite or weight gain/loss
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering or making decisions
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much

# Depression (continued)

- Loss of energy or feeling tired all the time
- Headaches, stomachaches and other physical complaints
- Substance abuse
- Feeling pessimistic or hopeless
- Being excessively anxious or worried
- Anger and rage
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Mood Swings

# Important to Know About Depression

- Illness not a weakness
- Treatable
- Has different causes: physiological, chemical, situational
- Unique to individual
- Not always quiet and withdrawn
- Common
  - Many don't know they have it
  - 1 in 5??
  - 30% seek treatment

# Possible Warning Signs of Suicide

- Take note of signs of depression
- Notes, poems, journal entries, etc. that dwell on death, suicide, how awful life is
- Statements subtle/not so subtle (i.e. – “I can’t take it anymore,” “I want to fall asleep and not wake up,” “I just want to die,” “You won’t have to worry about me much longer,” etc.
- Self-destructive/risk taking behaviors
- Substance abuse
- Getting things in order
- Acquiring the means
- Having a plan
- Burst of energy/elevation in mood

# Risk Factors for Suicide

- Previous suicide attempts
- Suicides or attempted suicides among family members or friends
- Hx. of abuse....especially sexual
- Significant loss
- Unrealistic personal or parental expectations
- Extreme perfectionism
- Disintegrating family relationships
- Failure

# Possible Warning Signs of Substance Abuse

- Detectable aroma
- Slurred speech
- Impaired motor activity
- Dilated/pinpoint pupils
- Paraphernalia: empties or full containers, papers, clips, bong, pipes, spoons, needles, foil, baggies, eye drops, lighters, aerosol cans, etc.
- Drop in school performance
- Attendance issues at school or work
- Unexplained moodiness
- Change in dress
- Change in friends
- Secretive conversations
- Messages from unknown people on answering machine/cell phone



# Substance Abuse (continued)

- Withdrawal from family
- Isolating
- Money unaccounted for
- Money or valuables missing from home
- Items of value showing up without explanation
- Poor hygiene
- Unable to keep curfew follow house rules
- Lying
- Discipline problems at school or work
- Unable to keep a job or frequent switching of jobs

# Possible Warning Signs of Violent or Juvenile Delinquent Behavior

## Big Time Red Flags

- Loss of temper on a almost daily basis
- Frequent physical fighting
- Significant property damage
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Increase in risk taking behaviors
- Detailed planning to commit crime
- Announcing threats or plans to hurt others
- Hurting animals
- Carrying a weapon

# Violent Behavior and Juvenile Delinquency (continued)

## Potential is There

- Hx. of violent or aggressive behavior
- Gang membership or interest in gangs
- Fascination with weapons
- Threatening others
- Trouble controlling anger
- Withdrawal
- Feeling rejected, persecuted and alone
- A victim of bullying
- Poor school performance
- Hx. of discipline problems/legal issues
- Feeling like they are being disrespected
- No or little regard for the right of others

# Possible Warning Signs of an Eating Disorder

Two main types: anorexia nervosa and bulimia

2-4% of teenagers.....90% are female

15-62% of female athletes may have an eating disorder

- Obvious weight loss
- Baggy clothing
- Preoccupation with dieting
- Body image distortion
- Ritual exercising and weighing oneself
- Preoccupation with food but rarely eating
- Withdrawal from activities that involve eating
- Insomnia or erratic sleep patterns

# Eating Disorders (continued)

- Use of laxatives and/or diet pills
- Disappearing after eating
- Eating alone
- Dental erosion
- Hollowed eyes and cheeks
- Brittle hair and nails, dry skin, slow pulse, irregular heart beat constipation
- Layer of soft hair over skin
- Loss of muscle mass
- Erratic menstrual cycle
- Always cold
- Substance abuse
- Depression
- Suicide attempts

# Some Thoughts on Prevention

- Communication – listen non-judgmentally, ask open ended questions, allow expression of feelings
- Limits, consequences and supervision are **VERY IMPORTANT**
- Be a parent not a friend
- Know your teens' friends and their parents
- Be involved with your son/daughter
- Know where your teen is at and who they are with
- Be wary of sleepovers
- Network with important people (i.e. – other parents, teachers, administrators, counselor)

# Some Thoughts on Intervention

- Break the denial and swallow the pride
- Act promptly
- Keep help in the context of love, care and concern
- Take control...doing nothing is not an option
- Get referral from a trusted source
- Be sure therapist is a licensed professional
- Be sure therapist has access to a psychiatrist
- Be sure therapist specializes in adolescent treatment
- Don't be afraid to involve the police
- Don't give up