



*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)

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Mostly interested in present, limited thoughts of future  
Intellectual interests expand and gain in importance  
Greater ability to do work (physical, mental, emotional)  
Sexuality  
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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