

Adolescence-The Bridge from Child to Adult

The maturation process of a growing and changing teenager is often difficult to understand let alone cope with. Even when adults look back on their own teen years they may be bewildered at the often confusing and contradictory behaviors that took place in their own lives. To help understand this process in the simplest of ways, the following depicts the stages that a child will go through in reaching adult status.

1. **Diminishing parent image**. Parents begin to matter less and less. What a peer thinks about a teen is more important than what his or her own parents think.
2. **Increasing need for grouping with peers**. The teen turns to his or her peers for acceptance in a group. What the group thinks often strongly influences teen behavior.
3. **Conscious concern for privacy and private time**. The teen will seek time alone to confer with other adolescents that they still belong to the peer group. This is often played out on the telephone.
4. **Realization of differences between self and others**. The teen will see him or herself as having individual qualities that sets themselves apart from their peers.
5. **Realization of one's responsibility for one's future**. The teen begins to think abstractly. They realize that they will bear the fruit of their own labors and irresponsibility's.
6. **Rebellion from dependency and desperate attempts at independence**. The teen will rebel at what they are told. They may rebel by acting or behaving in ways that are self-destructive. (i.e. sex , drugs etc.)
7. **Necessity for decision making**. The teen begins to realize that they are responsible for making decisions about their own future. (i.e. Will they go to college? When and with whom will they have sex? With whom will they associate?)
8. **Pressures for socialization and sex**. The teen has increasing opportunity and drives to socialize with others, especially with the opposite sex. As this occurs there will be pressures, some real and some imagined, to have sex. Sex may be looked upon by the teen as a "right of passage" into adulthood.
9. **Awareness of temptations and ambivalence of wants versus values**. This is seeded early in life by the parents, school and religion. The fruit of this seed now becomes apparent. The teen, which at one moment is torn between doing what he wants versus what is moral, becomes aware of choices he or she must make. The teen learns that temptation is not only a matter of saying no, but also knowing why to say no. The maturing teen must learn how to cope when confronted with simultaneous but opposite desires.
10. **Inability to balance limits and responses**. This may lead to "acting out behavior". Responses may be exaggerated. The teen's frame of reference for success and failure is much narrower than the adult. What an adult would consider a minor setback in a situation is viewed as an "earth-shattering" event.
11. **Need for identity figures**. There is the perceived need to be like others. Some role models are used, others are discarded.

12. Self-actualization--Groping for concrete set of values that are individual. Not everyone realizes this last and most difficult part of becoming an adult. This equates to knowing one's self and liking one's self. **Do we like the person in the mirror?**