



# Understanding Your Adolescent's Behavior

## Understanding Your Teen's Behavior

Adolescence is the time in life when young people make the journey out of childhood toward adulthood. It can be a wild ride for both teens and parents! It's all about change. These are changes that your child must try to understand and changes in your child that you must adjust to.

Adolescents are fun and stimulating, but they can also be confusing and frustrating. Understanding normal teen behavior can reduce the confusion, if not the frustration. Here are two key developmental issues for teens:

## Changes in Thinking and Reasoning

Children tend to be **concrete** thinkers. As teenagers, they begin to be able to think **abstractly**. They have new mental tools that allow them to:

- Analyze situations logically in terms of **cause** and **effect**.
- Consider "what might happen if...?"
- Think about their futures, evaluate alternatives, and set personal goals.
- Make mature decisions more often.

As their abilities to think and reason increase, teens will:

- Become increasingly independent.
- Take on increased responsibilities, such as babysitting or summer jobs.
- Begin to consider future careers and occupations.
- Become concerned about social issues such as racism or homelessness.

Teenagers become very focused on themselves and their new abilities. It is normal for them to:

- Argue for the sake of arguing.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Be self-centered.
- Constantly find fault with the adult's point of view.
- Behave like "drama queens" and "drama kings"...at least some of the time.

## Social Changes

All these changes allow teens to gain independence from their families:

- As teens mature, their peers become increasingly important.
- More and more, your teens want freedom to do things with their friends.
- Teens typically want more privacy and more time away from you.

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### ■ Parent-Child Connectedness: New Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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