

FACTS *for* FAMILIES

No. 58

December 2011

Normal Adolescent Development Part II

Late High School Years and Beyond

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 late high school adolescent are described below.

Movement towards Independence

- Increased independent functioning
- Firmer and more cohesive sense of identity
- Examination of inner experiences
- Ability to think ideas through
- Conflict with parents begins to decrease
- Increased ability for delayed gratification and compromise
- Increased emotional stability
- Increased concern for others
- Increased self-reliance
- Peer relationships remain important and take an appropriate place among other interests

Future Interests and Cognitive Changes

- Work habits become more defined
- Increased concern for the future
- More importance is placed on one's role in life

Sexuality

- Feelings of love and passion
- Development of more serious relationships
- Firmer sense of sexual identity
- Increased capacity for tender and sensual love

Morals, Values, and Self-Direction

- Greater capacity for setting goals

Normal Adolescent Development Part II, “Facts for Families,” No. 58 (12/11)

- Interest in moral reasoning
- Capacity to use insight
- Increased emphasis on personal dignity and self-esteem
- Social and cultural traditions regain some of their previous importance

Older teenagers do vary slightly from the above descriptions, but the feelings and behaviors are, in general, considered normal for each stage of adolescence.

For additional information see *Facts for Families*:

[#24 Know When to Seek Help For Your Child](#)

[#03 Teens Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)

[#63 Gay and Lesbian Adolescents](#)

[#65 Children's Threats: When Are They Serious?](#)

If you find *Facts for Families*® helpful and would like to make good mental health a reality, consider donating to the [Campaign for America's Kids](#). Your support will help us continue to produce and distribute Facts for Families, as well as other vital mental health information, free of charge.

You may also mail in your contribution. Please make checks payable to the AACAP and send to *Campaign for America's Kids*, P.O. Box 96106, Washington, DC 20090.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) represents over 8,500 child and adolescent psychiatrists who are physicians with at least five years of additional training beyond medical school in general (adult) and child and adolescent psychiatry.

Facts for Families® information sheets are developed, owned and distributed by AACAP. Hard copies of *Facts* sheets may be reproduced for personal or educational use without written permission, but cannot be included in material presented for sale or profit. All *Facts* can be viewed and printed from the AACAP website (www.aacap.org). *Facts* sheets may not be reproduced, duplicated or posted on any other website without written consent from AACAP. Organizations are permitted to create links to AACAP's website and specific *Facts* sheets. For all questions please contact the AACAP Communications & Marketing Coordinator, ext. 154.

If you need immediate assistance, please dial 911.

Copyright © 2012 by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.