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UNDERSTANDING TEENS LEADS TO BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Have you ever said this about your teen? “She’s always on the phone.” “He won’t do anything around the house.” “She can spend an hour on her hair, but doesn’t have five minutes to empty the dishwasher.” “I can’t stand the way teens dress today.”

Even when parent-child relationships are warm and caring, issues of independence may cause increased conflict during the teen years. Teens are undergoing rapid physical, emotional, and social development. When parents understand these changes they can better assist the development of their child into a responsible adult. Characteristics of many teens include:

Concerned with being popular. Teens want the acceptance of their peers. More time is spent with peers because they have similar tastes in music, dress, activities, dreams, and goals.

Challenge the way things are. Teens challenge rules and reasons of parents, teachers, and the world. This is the result of their intellectual growth. They want to try out new ideas and possibilities.

Express concern about how they look. They feel everyone is looking at them. They can now imagine what other people may be thinking. They feel as if they are living in a display window.

Have friends parents don’t approve of. Teens explore new relationships and ideas these friends have.

Influenced by peers. They look to their peers for norms in dress, drugs, alcohol, and sexual behaviors. However, research shows that teens are still strongly influenced by their parents on moral issues.

Need privacy. As teens change physically they feel a need for more privacy.

Moodiness. With all the changes they are experiencing at this time, they frequently become concerned with how they are doing. Hormonal changes occurring with their growth enhances their emotional response to situations.

With all this going on, it’s no wonder your teen might forget to take out the trash. As a parent this may be high on your priority list, but low on your teen’s list.

As your child transitions from a child to an adult, your parenting style also needs to change. Treating a teen as a young child is belittling to a teen and causes conflict. Include teens in discussions about rules. This helps them to work through problems and arrive at solutions that may involve compromise.

The next time your teen’s behavior taxes your patience, think about these teen characteristics before you respond. This may be the key to a better relationship.