



The Jekyll and Hyde Years

Tips for Parents of Teens

A parent told the story of how her wonderful daughter became a teen and some cruel trickster replaced her with this horrible monster. In time, the error was discovered and the monster was replaced with a wonderful, grown up woman. If this sounds like the child/adult in your home, you may be wondering how you can live more happily under the same roof with your teen.

Developmental Changes

Normal teenage development involves both internal and external conflict as teens test their boundaries, search for independence and try out their ideas about the world. They are a bundle of nerves and hormones struggling to be grown up. Sometimes they do it in rebellious and child-like ways that are hard to understand and even harder to live with.

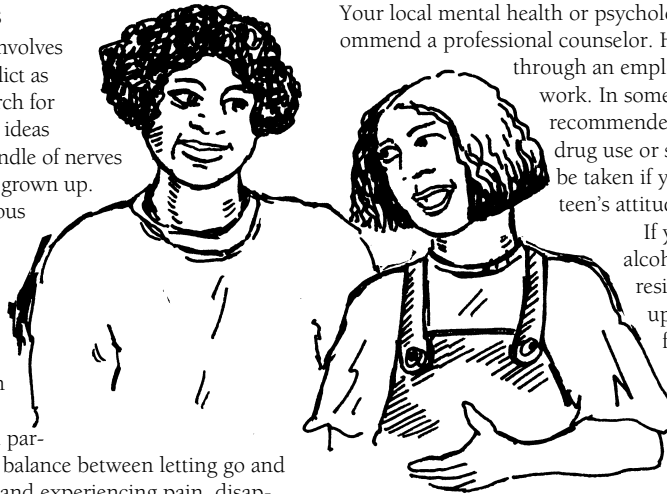
A Parent's Role

It's hard to stand by and watch your teen struggle. You don't like to see your teen hurt. As a parent, you must learn to strike a balance between letting go and holding on. Making mistakes, and experiencing pain, disappointment or anger are all part of growing up. Being too protective of your teen doesn't help him or her become an independent adult. You have experience and maturity on your side. If you can treat your teen with respect and help him or her keep esteem, you will have gone a long way in helping your teen on a difficult journey. You must show love when your teen doesn't love himself or herself and try to keep a positive attitude.

When to Seek Help

It can be difficult to determine if problems your teen is experiencing are a natural part of growing up or if professional help is needed. If your child exhibits any of these signs, consider seeking professional counseling:

- prolonged depression
- continual negative statements
- excessive anger
- talks about suicide
- physical or emotional abuse
- a drastic change in personality, appetite or friends
- loss of interest in school



Your local mental health or psychological association can recommend a professional counselor. Help may also be available through an employee assistance program at work. In some cases, family counseling is recommended. Because of the risk of drug use or suicide, quick action should be taken if you see deterioration in your teen's attitude.

If your teen denies using alcohol or other drugs, or resists seeing a counselor, set up an appointment with a family service professional. Acknowledge to your teen that you're not an expert in this field and will rely on the counselor to determine whether the child has a drug problem.

Positive Techniques for Coping

Peers will have a great influence on your teen so be open to meeting friends and encouraging wholesome activities. Be available to talk but avoid making judgments.

Let your child get burned a few times when trying out wings, but be there when your teen falls. Teach responsible behavior to rectify mistakes. Be generous with praise when you approve. Try to hold your tongue when you disapprove, unless you fear your teen will be harmed.

Survival Checklist for Parents of Teens

- Be a good role-model.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Respect your teen's privacy.
- Sign contracts for clearer goal expectations.
- Reward positive behavior.
- Reward help with family tasks.
- Set limits without controlling.