

# Some Ordinary Problems of Adolescents, and Their Solutions

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## **ABSTRACT**

Adolescence is the age of change. It is a vulnerable time when kids can develop unhealthy habits that grow into problems in their adult life. Behaviour issues of adolescence, which are quite common, also crop up during this time, making it impossible for parents to reach out to their teenagers. Teenagers face real concerns, between 13 and 19 years of age, on a daily basis as this is the most awkward growth stage of their lives. During this time, teens are exposed to some overwhelming external and internal struggles. They go through, and are expected to cope with hormonal changes, puberty, social and parental forces, work and school pressures, and so on. Many teens feel misunderstood. It is vital that their feelings and thoughts are validated and that the validation comes from their parents. Parents need to approach their children, who have been dealing with teenage growth issues, carefully and in a friendly manner to discuss the concern(s).

**Keyword:** Adolescence, Physical changes, Substance, challenges

## **How to Deal With Common Problems Of Adolescence**

Adolescence is not an easy time for kids or parents. The only way to deal with needs and problems at this age is to know about them and be ready to face them. Here is our list of the most common problems, and their solutions that adolescents have to deal with.

### **1. Physical changes**

Physical changes happen due to change in the teenager's hormone levels.

- Development of full breasts in girls can be awkward in the beginning. Girls may start to feel conscious about their figure.
- Change of voice and appearance of facial hair in boys is perhaps the most prominent change that takes place during adolescence.
- Acne is one of the major problems.
- Muscle gain sometimes leads to excessive body weight in teens.
- The growth of pubic hair in girls and boys.
- Body odour becomes evident.
- Girls start their periods.

### **Solution:**

The best way you can do to help your teenager get through the stage is to make them aware of these changes.

- Explain that it is normal for the body to change as every teenager goes through it!

- Help them adapt to these changes – acknowledge the change and help them accept it.
- Enable them to stay healthy and fit through a nutritious diet and exercise.

## 2. Emotional changes and problems

Hormones affect your teenager not only physically but also emotionally.

- Adolescence is the age between adulthood and childhood. Teenagers are often confused about their role and are torn between their responsibilities as growing adults and their desires as children.
- They tend to feel overly emotional (blame it on the hormones). Just about anything and everything can make them happy, excited, mad or angry.
- Adolescent girls are vulnerable to crying.
- Mood swings are common among teenage boys and girls.
- Bodily changes result in self-consciousness.
- Children who hit puberty early may even feel weird.
- Feelings of inferiority or superiority may arise at this time.
- Adolescence is the age when sexual feelings arise in youngsters. Feelings and thoughts about sex can trigger a sense of guilt.

### Solution:

Puberty can be an emotional roller-coaster ride. And it is normal. Here is how you can help your kid deal with these emotional problems of adolescence.

- Assist them to take care of themselves. Tell your teenagers that it is okay to feel the way they are feeling.
- Encourage them to exercise as physical activity helps keep the serotonin (creates good feelings and happiness) levels up.
- Let them talk. Listen to them without judging and avoid giving them advice when they are not ready for it.
- Share your experiences of puberty or let them talk to an older sibling who has gone through the same. It will emphasize that it is okay to feel the way they do.
- Indulging in a creative activity can help them channelize their emotions.

## 3. Behavioural changes

Overwhelming emotions can lead to impulsive behaviour, which can be harmful to your child as well as others. Mostly, it is just teen behaviour that will last as long as their adolescence.

- Adolescence is the time when kids develop and exercise their independence. This can give rise to questioning the parents' rules (seen as argumentative) and standing up for what they believe is right (seen as stubbornness).
- Significant developmental change in the brain makes teens moody, tired and difficult to deal with.
- The raging hormones in teenage boys can even push them to get into physical confrontations. They would also want to listen to loud music.
- As a part of their new-found independence, adolescents may also want to try new things and take risks, resulting in careless behaviour.
- Sometimes, peer pressure and the need to 'fit in' can make them behave in a certain way or develop certain habits that are hard to break.

- Your teen's dressing, hairstyle, and sense of fashion also change, mostly to something that you may not approve of.
- The most troubling behaviour is perhaps your teen hanging out with problem kids and adapting to a dangerous lifestyle.
- Lying is one of the common teen behavioural issues. Teens may lie to avoid confrontation with parents or out of fear.

**Solution:**

- Behavioural problems in adolescence can make life difficult for parents. But remember that it is a passing phase, and is entirely normal.
- Gaining your child's trust is important if you want to help him with behavioral issues. Talk to them and listen to what they have to say. Do not judge or criticize them, as it could worsen their behaviour.
- Let them know that you love them just as they are. Encourage them to be true to themselves and not take on a personality just to please others.
- Remember that your adolescent child is not completely independent in dealing with his emotions and needs your support. Help him by telling him what you do when you are feeling sad, angry, jealous, etc. He can try those solutions to come out of his own emotional issues.
- You will have to intervene if you see them falling into bad company. Remember that adolescents are sensitive and may not take criticism well.

**4. Substance Use and Abuse**

Teenagers are vulnerable and can be easily swayed to the wrong side. Substance abuse is one of the biggest problems that parents of adolescents around the world have to deal with.

- Peer pressure is one of the significant factors that drive adolescents to take up smoking and drinking or to do drugs.
- The tendency to take risk encourages most teens to try smoking or drinking even before they are of legal age.
- What may start as a 'thrill', can become a habit if it remains unchecked.
- If there is somebody who smokes or drinks at home, they can become your teen's role models.
- Poor self-esteem and the need to be 'cool' can push adolescents to smoke or drink.
- Easy access to substances like cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, and anabolic steroids may increase the temptation to try illicit substances.

**Solution:**

- Keep an eye on your child's behaviour. Look for erratic behaviour and change in his or her appetite, sleep patterns, and moods.
- Do not spy on them or accuse them of any wrongdoing. Encourage them to talk and be honest. Tell them what your concerns are and discuss the problem with them.
- If your child is not willing to talk to you, the doctors can ask confidential questions to know if they are abusing any substances. Avoid going as far as a drug test, as that may come across as confrontational and threaten the kid.
- If necessary, get your adolescent the appropriate treatment.

## 5. Educational challenges

High school is not all about fashion, friends, and parties. Kids also have a lot of educational activities on their plate.

- Pressure to perform academically and obtain college admission can be stressful and make your teenager moody.
- Juggling school work, extra-curricular activities (must for college admissions) and chores at home can be tiring.
- Distractions at school can result in poor academic performance, which will add to the pressure.

### **Solution:**

- Support your kid's aspirations for college education as what they need is the encouragement to do well.
- You could cut down their household chores to enable them to focus on their school projects when needed.
- Nutrition and exercise can help them get the strength and endurance they need to get through the hectic high school period.
- If you feel your child is getting overwhelmed with his daily activities, cut down on a few tasks because adolescents still don't have the lung capacity of an adult and get tired sooner than a grown-up person.

## 6. Health problems

Adolescents are vulnerable emotionally and physically. Without proper nutrition and healthcare, they are susceptible to illnesses. According to a 2015 WHO report, 1.3 million adolescents died in 2015, a majority of who had preventable diseases.

- Teenagers have a hectic schedule as they hop from one activity to another with little time to eat or rest properly. Unhealthy eating habits prevent them from getting the nutrition they need.
- Consciousness about their body can lead to eating disorders, especially in girls. Adolescent girls who worry about their weight and appearance can develop disorders like anorexia or bulimia. Stress can also lead to loss of appetite and sleeplessness in young children.
- Unhealthy eating habits and a less active lifestyle could also lead to obesity – this is often the case when your child consumes a lot of empty calories through fast food and sodas.

### **Solution:**

Parental guidance can help abate health problems in adolescence to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Lead by example and encourage your children to eat healthy food, exercise right and sleep on time.

- Ensure they get nutrition through their meals. Give them a balanced diet.
- Be there for them emotionally and physically as this will help them deal with any possible disorders.

## 7. Psychological problem

Research has revealed that around 50% of mental health disorders that adults have, begin at the age of 14. In fact, one-third of adolescent deaths are suicides triggered by depression (1). If your child is overly moody and is not eating or sleeping at all, it is imperative you get professional help for them.

- Teenagers may have self-esteem or confidence issues. The feelings of inferiority or superiority often arise from their appearance, and acceptance of their body – skin colour, beauty, and figure.

- Poor performance in academics and low IQ can also demotivate them. They develop the ‘I’m not good enough’ attitude towards life.
- Depression is one of the common psychological problems associated with adolescence.
- The stress and pressure of adolescence can create anxiety related issues, while mood swings can lead to conduct disorder or oppositional defiant disorder.
- Eating disorders are also psychosomatic as they start with the adolescent having a poor self-image and the need to change the way they look by any means.

**Solution:**

While moodiness and temper tantrums are normal in teenage girls and boys, they may not always be what they seem. Identifying symptoms of psychological problems in adolescence is not easy and needs the eye of an expert.

- Most of the time, talking about the problems and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can prevent the onset of depression.
- If your child is overly moody and cynical, it is time to intervene and seek professional help if necessary.
- Sometimes, your teenage girl or boy may be unhappy only at home, and doing fine outside. Talk to the child’s teachers and friends to know if they are moody and disoriented at school as well. If they are, then it is a cause for concern.
- Do not brush away their feelings, as that can make things worse.
- Encourage them to communicate with you. For this, you need to talk to them. If you think your child would not take it easy, talk to him in the car where the chances of confrontation are fewer as you are not face-to-face.

**8. Social problems – dating and relationships**

Attraction to the opposite sex begins during puberty. Adolescence is the time when their sexual or reproductive organs start developing. At such a vulnerable time, it is but natural for kids to feel awkward in social situations.

- Teenagers want to have an identity of their own. They tend to look up to role models at home or outside.
- Adolescents also start thinking about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and question your take on certain things.
- They need time to understand and get comfortable with their sexuality. Girls and boys start experiencing ‘weird’ feelings towards the other sex and may not know what to do about it.
- This is the time they start dating. Your adolescent may not be comfortable talking to you about it and may go with little information or misinformation they have about it.
- Competition is another important aspect of a teenager’s social life. Your child may compete with her peers in about anything and everything. Their spirit of competition speaks a lot about their perception of self – whether they have a positive self-esteem or a negative one.
- Sexual feelings and thoughts of sex may seem wrong to an adolescent, because of which they may feel guilty.
- Their social circle expands during this time as they seem occupied interacting with friends on social media sites, through their phone and outside.

**Solution:**

Here is how you can deal with social problems of adolescence –

- Dating, romance, and sex are delicate issues that your teenager may not be comfortable talking about. Don't make it more awkward for your child. Be confident and rational when discussing the subject.
- Your child may seem to spend more time outside than with you. Accept that your adolescents are discovering a whole new world. Just let them know you are there when they need you.
- Sharing your dating and social life experiences in school can put them at ease sometimes.

**9. Sexual health – unplanned pregnancy and STIs**

The development of secondary sexual characteristics during adolescence gives rise to new feelings in teenagers and pushes them to experiment with their bodies.

- Adolescence is the time when teens experience their first kiss, the intimate dance with their 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' and secret make out sessions.
- Without proper guidance, teenagers may become sexually active before they are ready. This could result in unwanted pregnancies. Unwanted pregnancy is the biggest risk that adolescent girls face.
- Unprotected sex can also lead to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV.

**Solution:**

- Have 'the talk' with your kids as they may already be learning about sexual health and reproduction at school. Your duty as a parent is to ensure that they understand the importance of safe sex.
- The hormonal changes in teenagers may make them act impulsively. Your teen may not like it but it is important that you talk to them about the consequences of unprotected sex and how it can change their life.
- Awareness is the only way to prevent early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in adolescents.

**10. Addiction to cyberspace**

The advent of social media has changed the way we interact with each other. It has affected teenage lifestyles the most.

- Your teen may seem to spend hours on phone, texting, talking or simply playing.
- Adolescents addicted to the internet tend to have fewer friends and a less active social life. They lead solitary lives and are happy browsing the internet for hours. (2)
- Addiction to cyberspace also cuts short their physical activities, resulting in an unhealthy and sedentary lifestyle.
- Internet addiction adversely impacts academic performance.

**Solution:**

- Do not assume that your child is addicted to the internet just because he or she spends a lot of time in front of the computer. They could be doing more productive things on the system other than surfing the net.
- Do not say 'no' to the Internet. That will only make them adamant. Instead, talk about your concerns and help them work on other things that do not require a computer.

- You could use parental controls, but that may not be taken well by your teen – remember that they are not kids anymore. At the same time, they may also not have the judgment to make the right choices. So guide them as a parent, but never decide for them.
- Enrol them in activities that encourage them to interact with others. Have family activities that will make them want to spend less time at the computer.
- Have some cyber rules and boundaries for everybody at home. Limit the use of the mobile phone to a few hours in a day, and avoid bringing the phone to the bedroom as it is likely to affect a person's sleep.

### 11. Aggression and violence

Aggression is especially a concern with adolescent boys. Young boys start to develop muscles, grow tall and have a coarser, manly voice. In addition to that, they are moody and vulnerable and can let others get under their skin.

- Adolescent boys can get into fights at school.
- Worse, they could start bullying others, which is a major problem that adolescent boys and girls have to deal with.
- Boys may fall into bad company and be drawn to acts of violence, vandalism, and aggression. They could be easily swayed to own or use a firearm or a weapon too.
- Impulse acts of violence can lead to serious consequences, including death. According to the WHO report, interpersonal violence causes around 180 adolescent deaths around the world.
- Teenage girls are likely to suffer violence or aggression by a partner.

#### **Solution:**

Children tend to imitate what they see at home. The following remedies for problems of adolescence will help abate aggression, violence and related issues.

- Teach your children to be kind and considerate. Nurturing relationships at home can help them become less aggressive.
- Prevent access to firearms and alcohol early to prevent violence.
- Teach them life skills and the importance of compassion. Lead them by being their model.
- Avoid exposing them to violent stories, games or movies at an age when they cannot differentiate between what is right and wrong.
- Make them try alternative ways, such as going for a run, doing yoga or using a punch bag, for venting out their anger. This way, they understand that it is alright to be angry but how they deal with it makes all the difference.

### 12. Tobacco, drugs and alcohol

Drug abuse is a serious problem that can lead to serious, even fatal, consequences. Research suggests that nearly 25 percent of adolescents (ages 12 to 17) have used drugs, with 16 to 18 as the peak age for drinking and drug abuse.

#### **Solution:**

Teens whose parents regularly communicate with them about the dangers of drugs have a decreased risk of using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. Following are some tips for addressing drugs, alcohol and tobacco use with your teen:

- Set a good example. If you smoke, drink heavily or use drugs, you are teaching your child that these behaviours are acceptable.
- Teach your child that drugs, tobacco and alcohol can harm their bodies, and that it's OK to say "no."
- Teach your child how to avoid situations where others may be drinking, smoking or using drugs, and to choose friends who do not use these substances.
- Know who your child's friends are, and don't allow your child to attend parties where there is no adult supervision.
- Encourage your child to become involved in extra-curricular activities at school, a church youth group, or other programs that provide opportunities for teens to gather and socialize in a fun and safe environment.

### 13. Tattoos and piercing

Teens of every generation have their fads. Most teenage fads are harmless and eventually fade away without permanent damage. Unfortunately, some of today's most popular fads—particularly tattoos and body piercing—can be permanent and can affect your teen's health. Here are some ideas on how to discuss these fads with your teen:

#### **Solution:**

- Don't wait until your child reaches the teen years to talk about tattoos and piercing. Many younger children look up to teens as role models.
- Explain the possible dangers of tattoos and piercings, such as infection or allergic reactions. The risk of infection increases if a tattoo or piercing is done under non-sterile conditions.
- Ask your teen to imagine how multiple piercings or tattoos might affect his or her future career or relationships.
- Explain that a tattoo may not turn out the way you want, and you can't take it back if you don't like it. Further, tattoo removal is very expensive and can be quite painful. In some cases, tattoo removal may cause permanent discoloration of the skin.

### 14. Depression and suicide

It is common for teens to occasionally feel unhappy. However, when the unhappiness lasts for more than two weeks and the teen experiences other symptoms, then he or she may be suffering from depression. There are many reasons why teenagers become unhappy. High-stress environments can lead to depression. Teens can develop feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy over school performance, social interaction, sexual orientation or family life. If friends, family or things that the teen usually enjoys don't help to improve his or her sadness or sense of isolation, there's a good chance that he or she is depressed. Often, depressed teens will display a striking change in their thinking and behaviour, lose their motivation or become withdrawn. The following are the major signs of depression in adolescents:

- Sadness, anxiety or a feeling of hopelessness
- Loss of interest in food or compulsive overeating that results in rapid weight loss or gain
- Staying awake at night and sleeping during the day
- Withdrawal from friends
- Rebellious behaviour, a sudden drop in grades or skipping school
- Complaints of pain including headaches, stomach-aches, low back pain or fatigue



- Use of alcohol or drugs and promiscuous sexual activity (These are common ways teens cope with depression.)
- A preoccupation with death and dying (This often is a cry for help and usually indicates a serious case of depression.)

Depression is a serious problem, but it also is treatable. If you suspect your teen is depressed, tell your child's health care professional and seek help right away.

Suicide is a serious problem within the teen population. Adolescent suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults in the United States. It is estimated that 500,000 teens attempt suicide every year, with 5,000 succeeding.

Warning signs of suicide include:

- Threatening to kill oneself
- Preparing for death, giving away favourite possessions, writing goodbye letters or making a will
- Expressing a hopelessness for the future
- Giving up on oneself, talking as if no one else cares

## CONCLUSION

You may have been a teenager yourself. But once you become a parent to a teen, you seem clueless. Think about it – your adolescent is at an age that you have already been through. Be empathetic and try to understand what your child is going through. That makes dealing with their problems easier.

The period between childhood and young adulthood is a period of rapid change - physical, emotional, cognitive and social. No two teenage bodies are the same. Adolescent health should therefore become a lawful and clear concern of different contributing parties in this field, including parents, teachers, health professionals, religious counsellors, the media and other community organizations. Adolescent health should become an integral part of public health departments, athletic clubs, youth organizations and non-government organizations. As adolescents grow, their relationships with selves and others become increasingly influential. Kindness, patience, empathy, sympathy, sharing, respect to elders, sense of responsibility and not going overboard with the authority they are given are few things that should be deeply put in adolescent's minds in order to keep them on the track of life.

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