

Teenage rebellion

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Teenage rebellion is not a new issue in society and every generation has had this conflict. Teenage years are not always a nightmare for parents, and most adults enjoy watching their children grow into young adults. The biggest thing about teenage rebellion, is that young people go through a period of wanting to reject everything their parents stand for. This leads us to ask the question, is this normal and is it healthy? Some may say it is, and some may say it is not. The key task of rebellion is to find personal values, even though it is almost impossible for teenagers to do so successfully, because of the critical examination of parental ways of thinking. The only way to deal with rebellious teenagers is to avoid confrontation and recognize the fact that most teenagers will pass through this stage and return to the normal lifestyle. In this paper I will attempt to show that this type of behavior is normal for teens, and moreover, is also healthy. Teenagers are not really rebellious. It is just the stage everybody has to go through, which is completely natural. When you were a child, everyone told what you what to do and what not to do. Becoming older makes it possible to do what you were not allowed to do before. Teenagers feel themselves adult enough to do whatever they want. Not always knowing what to start with, the first thing they do is doing something that their parents would not do[1]. This may include radical changes in the appearance which is the first signal that the child is no longer a child, but a teenager. It is a natural process and causes no harm to health. It is just a way of experimenting with things for themselves. Parents need to realize that teenagers are not attacking the personal value system, and actively forbidding them to do something will not help. They will want it even more as a result, and most likely will do it

anyway. One of the funniest things is that even the most rebellious teenagers end up having the same value system as their parents[2]. Therefore, the rebellion itself is a sign of normal development. Moreover, it is healthier for teenagers to feel and show some independence, rather than accept everything they are told. The most upsetting concern with the teenager, is that the previously calm child has now become very critical of his parents. It is easier when parents understand that for the teenager, it is a hard time also. Learning to become independent is a difficult task. If the teenager has the right to express his/her opinion and feels respect, then this stage seems smoother. However, it is never acceptable for the teenager to become abusive with parents. It has been noticed that the teenagers who grow up independent, feel themselves more secure at home, and are more willing to agree with the parents. During the rebellion period, teenagers become obsessed with the mirror and are often very dissatisfied with their appearance. As a result, the young adult becomes moody and introspective. The reason behind these changes is hormonal change which knocks off any balance in the body[3]. It regulates the sexual development and changes in the appearance. For examples, boys have to deal with their voice breaking, increasing body hair, and new sexual feelings. They grow very quickly and it is not surprising that they become clumsy. Moreover, at this stage a friend's opinion is the most important thing in the world, and appearance is one of the many ways to fit into the peer group. Most parents forget how difficult the teenager years were. While being teenagers they also were moody, which is partially caused by hormonal changes. However, there is also psychological basis for mood changes. Many young people try to find their

own way in life. It is especially common for the 15 year old teenager to try and find out how they perceive themselves, and more important, how their perception of themselves matches with what other people think of them. Taking into account physical and emotional changes, pressure from school, and career choice, the changes in mood are not a very unusual response. What can parents do to be prepared for the teen years? The first thing to remember, is that it is almost impossible to develop open communication when the child is already a teenager. This needs to be done several years before, when the teenager is still a child. Psychologists propose that communication about physical and emotional changes needs to take place during puberty. For the girls, it is approximately 12 years, however can be earlier, and for the boys it is 13-15 years, however the range can be much wider. If the child develops earlier than expected, the parents feel themselves caught by surprise and usually realize that their child is completely unprepared[4]. It is important to talk to girls as early as 10 years about the physical changes in the body, otherwise, it can lead to the decrease of self-esteem and bad attitude to sex. Boys are also not prepared for the puberty changes, and become much more embarrassed by the body changes. Because girls are developing faster, boys may be very anxious thinking that their development is not “ normal”. Another aspect to handling teenage rebellion, is for parents to keep in mind how important is the issue. Is purple hair really an important issue to get into an argument with the teenager? It is not harming anyone. It might just be embarrassing to walk down the street with, but is it really harmful? Society isn't the same as when you were a child. The rules constantly change, and a parent's level of

acceptability should change. Society will either accept it and end the teenage rebellion, or make life difficult enough for the teenager to want to change. Teenagers want to be perceived as adults, and therefore expect more freedom in their actions based on trust. Allowing them to be more independent, in the combination of helping them to recognize the fact, that soon they will be fully responsible for themselves and their actions, is the next step of making rebellion stage less aggressive[5]. Parents, for example, may start giving more choices in small issues first, and after proving that they are capable of dealing with them, teenagers can receive more independence. Of course, the basic limits need to be outlined. For most young people the concept of being “cool” is of primary importance. They think that if they do not hang out with that person, or dress a certain way, they are a failure if that decision was not made by themselves. They would rather make the wrong decisions, but on their own, because being independent is a great success for them[6]. The truth is that today parents have many reasons to be worried about their children, since teenagers have more knowledge about, and have more access to drugs, alcohol and sex than before. Teenagers are rebellious, and it is natural that they feel they don’t need guidance, and usually overestimate their abilities to handle themselves. Teenagers have an illusion of being invulnerable, and do not always realize the problems they may encounter. They need to make mistakes in order to learn not to repeat them. However, the scope of these mistakes should be limited. Of course, there is no guaranteed strategy to keep a teenager completely safe at this rebellious stage of his life. One of the best ways is to introduce rules that concern safety strategies in place, so

that parents know who will be driving their teenager, or where the event will be taking place and so on. The rules should be clear and brief and give some freedom, thus increasing the chances that the teenager will adhere to the major safety issues. The causes of natural rebellion can be outlined as follows[7]: 1) The primary reason is the desire to be independent. It is a developmental norm and teenage rebellion is unavoidable. The desire to be independent varies from child to child: One rebellious child may seem to be perfect compared to another one. The major idea is still the same. It is normal for every single child to go wrong at some period of growing up, because it is the transition from childhood to adulthood. 2) Normal rebellion is difficult to handle, but it is more normal than the desire for dependence in the later years. If one was to imagine the opposite of rebellion, then the teenager would stay at home, be afraid to make decisions and refuse to accept responsibility for anything. Even though such a child is perfectly calm, and a dream for any parent, in reality it is not what parents want for their children. 3) Rebellion is natural and needs to be perceived as a normal desire to grow. As it was already mentioned, the process of growing includes making decisions through learning from experiences. This leads to the formation of personal beliefs and values. Teenagers are usually inexperienced in all fields of life, and, therefore, make mistakes which are completely normal. 4) Teenage rebellion is a natural desire to grow and should be desirable by any parent. A certain amount of rebellion is good, because it also helps the parents not to put unrealistic expectations on their children, and gradually transfers responsibility for the choices on future adults. 5) Normal rebellion is the imitation of peer models, because they

have no other models to attain the desired level of independence. Moreover, this need to be like a peer is a great one. It can be a very positive influence on the child, if parents help their kids choose good friends. Healthy rebellion is characterized by the following factors: a) It helps teenagers to become adults through accepting more responsibility with the help of increased independence b) It involves open communication between the teenager and a parent who is willing to listen, and at least tries to understand their world. Parents ask questions and provide guidelines and restrictions where necessary, with both sides having freedom to share ideas and feelings c) Healthy rebellion is gradual and different in expression. It is important to understand that rebellion is not the way of life for teens, and that they will not always ignore the family moral settings. It is just the maturity process. d) Rebellion should be creative in order for teens to learn to stand up for their personal values in a positive manner. Failure to give them the room they need to grow, can actually cause them to act out in more destructive ways. e) Healthy rebellion helps teens develop into adults and allow parents to accept the fact that their children are becoming adults. Adults treat teenagers as peers, not as subordinates. Unhealthy reasons for rebellion include parental discord, cruel discipline methods, family problems like abusive situations and alcoholism, peer influence and fear of failure, and low self esteem. Rebellion is unhealthy, if any of the above factors are noticed. Before trying to change the behavior of the teenager, the primary cause must be eliminated. The characteristics of unhealthy rebellion include: a) Closed communication between parents and teenagers. Lack of discussion and relationships are more and more strained. b) Expression of rebellion is

sudden and extreme including anger outbursts. c) Lack of trust. Teenagers become dishonest, and are often caught in lies while explaining their bad behavior. d) Increasing number of restrictions and harsh discipline. As a result, young people push more on their personal limits, instead of discovering the family moral principle; e. g. negative attitude to all authority figures, not only parents, is the manifestation of the unhealthy rebellion. In such way, after several years, young adults are discouraged to follow any guidelines. e) Unhealthy rebellion is based on the excessive controlling when parents do not understand what they need to do, and cannot provide enough independence e. g. unhealthy rebellion leads to the delay of maturity. While trying to discipline the rebellious teenagers, parents need to adapt the concepts of negotiation, because teenagers only listen when they are treated like adults. In solving the problem, parents should be sure that they both are speaking about the same thing[8]. For example, parents are worried about safety while teenagers are sure that parents do not trust them. The next step is to find a solution acceptable by each side. Even though such approach seems to be quite simple, it is not such in reality. If the parents on the contrary, employ the army like approach, the teenagers will more likely be rebellious. Teenagers are learning to be adults, and this why rebellion occurs more in them as opposed to children. Teenagers already know what it means to be a kid, and no longer want to be told what to do, where to go and with whom to hang out. Teenagers are attracted to adult life because of the freedom grown-ups possess. However they do not realize the responsibilities that come with independence. Confronting never works, but only provides the opportunity to test their will and patience[9]. Discussing behavior works

better, however not all the time. Speaking about behavior in general, and not about their behavior in particular, may make teenagers feel safe, and they will avoid protecting their personal position. During rebellion teenager will always question every point made by the adult, and parents need to be prepared for the argument. Patience and forgiveness are vital in dealing with teenagers. Rebellious behavior should be treated firmly but with fairness. Perhaps, teenagers should know that the way they behave might seem okay for the given age, but is not acceptable for an adult person. They may work to improve their lifestyle because of the desire to be more adult-like. It has been argued that rebellious behavior of teenagers is the result of bad discipline. Nevertheless, even perfect children are rebellious at the age when hormonal changes take place. Teenagers change very fast, and parents are usually very slow in responding to the changed circumstances. After realizing the nature of rebellion it is necessary to find ways to deal with the rebellion. There are several basic principles to keep in mind: 1) It is necessary to practice loving discipline from early childhood. The desire to test limits is the result of inconsistent discipline. Teenagers want to see what they can get away with. If teenagers are aware about the rules and punishment for breaking them, and they know that parents' love and support is always there, then teenagers will not want to disappoint adults with bad behavior. 2) Even in providing independence, limits still should be set, along with working toward more responsibility, and providing opportunities to make decisions. Parents should decide for themselves in which areas they are willing to give up, or can allow more flexibility. 3) Parents should be understanding and flexible. There should always be space for desire to change, accept and even

apologize for the mistakes, not only for the teenager but for the parent as well. Home should become the safe place to take risks and even safer to land while failing. 4) Teenagers always want to do something that was not allowed before, therefore, parents should find substitutes for these activities. Continuous prohibition without providing alternatives will only worsen the situation. 5) Parents should ask for, and actually spend enough time with the teenager in order to have open communication, and be aware of all problems which are bothering the teen. Showing interest and attending their activities can also help, because teens need even more attention than before. 6) Parents should never withhold acceptance, forgiveness or encouragement from their children. Most parents believe that teenagers are being rebellious and obnoxious on purpose. However, the recent research published in Good Medicine has presented evidence that teenagers are rebellious because of developing brain activity[10]. It has been suggested that the first three years of life are crucial for the further development of life. It was also added that the teenage years are of the equal importance. The brain is growing and it explains the frustrating behavior associated with teenagers. Some of the facts about the teenage brain are[11]: 1) Teenagers are not smaller versions of adult, but are at the transition stage of brain development. 2) The frontal lobe of the teenage brain is closed for construction, which means that they are unable to plan and consider, therefore act more impulsively than rationally. 3) All actions and values are based on emotions. If parents want to stay in control of teenager's behavior, the communication must be emotionally relevant to the mood of the teenager. 4) The motivation should be positive, using rewards, and keeping teens intrigued while learning is the

best practice. 5) Adults should still show that they are stronger, not physically but emotionally and mentally. Teenagers need someone around them whom they can battle with as well as imitate. 6) The lack of desire to communicate and to explain the behavior is caused by the need to sleep-in and release of emotions. The major reason for rebellion is the desire of teenagers to find their place in the adult world. Like all children, teens do not know the limits of behaviour without first exploring the edges. Nobody is born with the sense of what is wrong and what is not. All lessons are learnt during the maturation process. Teenagers need enough time to learn good behaviour, and rebellion is a completely natural event in the life of every growing child. Rebellion occurs even in the most loving and intelligent families, because the process is driven naturally by hormonal forces. Teenagers need their parents at this stage of life more than ever before. Positive discipline, open communication and mutual trust helps to make transition into adulthood easier for both parents and teenagers.

----- [1] Carter 31 [2] Csikszentmihalyi 1986, 29 [3] Csikszentmihalyi 1986, 37 [4] Carter 39 [5] Csikszentmihalyi 2001, 167 [6] Csikszentmihalyi 2001, 171 [7] Nelsen 157-159 [8] Edgette 64 [9] Edgette 59 [10] Riera 197 [11] Riera 145