

# Teenagers: adolescence and young people



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Young people rely greatly on friends or individuating themselves from their families and peers, and for developing their identities. In many circumstances their dependence on friends coevolves with their increasing independence from others. Friendships provide a variety of benefits and serve crucial personal and social functions. Young people wonder why others like or dislike them, particularly when they question their own attractiveness. Are they liked for the person they feel themselves to be inside? Or are they liked for ulterior reasons - because they are smart, athletic, popular, of high status, have their driver's license, appeal to the opposite sex, have permissive parents or make the other feel more important or accomplished because of their own perceived shortcomings? An individual's self-appraisal and self-concept are closely tied to friends' and peers' reaction.

Friendship for many young people provide " somebody to talk to" during adolescence. Friends can help you get burdens off your chest. Teenagers, as they mature into adults tend to be more selective of their friends. Friendships for teens are based on status, common interest, values and personalities. Teens will largely find their emotional needs for understanding, support and guidance coming more from friends than from family. As teens mature and hormones take over, teens explore their new feelings and get to a comfort level with the opposite sex.

Friends define social status, every high school or junior school has its groups or cliques with which our teens will affiliate largely based on the friends they choose and where they feel comfortable. All teens want to be accepted, but today they face more and more pressure to be part of the crowd. Fitting in might mean having the latest cell phone or the " coolest" jeans, or hanging

out with the right people. Many teenagers battle with 'peer pressure' and bullying. They might do all sorts of dangerous and unhealthy things just to conform to their peers. It could mean that they start smoking, drinking, clubbing all night, using drugs, picking locks, shoplifting, or even petty thievery.

If anyone refuses to acknowledge the demands of the group, he is rejected and forsaken, and perceived as 'un-cool', stupid, etc. Teenagers at school also make fun of anyone and everyone who does not look good. Moreover, the occasional rages, moodiness and sulkiness due to hormonal changes and peer pressure, hinders a teenager from having a good time. For some teens, focusing on perfection in appearance, may lead to extreme measures such as eating disorders, drug use to lose weight, or steroids to strengthen or improve body image.

Other teens just feel stressed to keep up with the prettiest, thinnest, or most fashionable kids at school. I sometimes find myself getting really irritable for no reason, or suddenly feeling down or going from sadness to anger to joy in a matter of minutes. Being a teen means struggling with identity and self-image. I have also noticed a sense of distance from parents and family. I have felt like I want to be on my own, make my own decisions. But it can also seem overwhelming and even a bit lonely at times.