



PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Why Are The Teenage Years So Difficult?

By Jacqueline B. Sallade, Ed.D. and Nicholas E. Brink, Ph.D.

The teenager's main job is to overcome a conflict between independence and dependence. Some of the resulting difficulties can be a complete breakdown in communication with parents, a connection with a crowd of very "influential" friends, a switch in school and job, and romantic interests away from those that parents actively encouraged. What teens see as experimentation and adventure can panic parents, who already have learned from their own mistakes.

What can easily be created is a tug-of-war between teen and parent. The first way to avoid the power struggle build-up is by not pushing too hard and rigidly for just one alternative, or against one choice. The teen, who is always being lectured about what career is best, or how horrible it is to smoke, is most likely to rebel.

Listen with understanding, even though agreement may not be possible. Show respect. Ask short, thought-provoking questions about the choices being made, such as "What would the results be?" Set up a few solid rules with your teenager. Offer opportunities for constructive activities without a feeling of pressure. State facts and your own feelings without judgment or criticism.

Perhaps most important of all, be patient, keep your sense of humor, and stay loving. The teen years will pass. Yours did!

Talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.