

## 2. Adolescent Development: What's Happening?

### At a Glance...



Adults sometimes forget what it is like to be a teen. All kinds of changes are occurring that we can and cannot see. When parents reflect on their own teenage years and what happened to them, this knowledge will help them parent their own teens.

- ☐ Changes During Adolescence: "What Can I Expect?" handout (A-2-d)
- ☐ Age Range of Pubertal Change handout (A-2-e)
- ☐ Adolescent Word Search handout (A-2-f)
- ☐ Adolescent Word Search Answers handout (A-2-g)

### Time Required



A little over an hour for activities and discussion.

### Core Concept



Understanding the development of adolescents will help parents do a better job with their teens.

### Objective



Parents will be able to identify characteristics of adolescent development of boys and girls at different ages.

### Materials



- ☐ Pencils and paper
- ☐ Flip chart and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- ☐ Overhead projector and screen
- ☐ "Am I Normal?" transparency (A-2-a)
- ☐ "Developmental Stages of Teens" handout (A-2-b)
- ☐ "How Parents Can Help" handout (A-2-c)

### Recommended

### Supplemental Materials

- SP491-A *Teen Independence*
- SP491-B *Teen Sexuality*
- SP491-C *Teen Alcohol and Other Drug Use*

These are available free of charge from your county Agricultural Extension Office or visit the Agricultural Extension Service Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs>. For other resources, check your local library.

- Blume, J. (1970). *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing: New York.
- Bourgeois, P. and Wolfish, M. (1994). *Changes in You and Me: A Book About Puberty, Mostly for Boys*. Somerville House Books Limited: Ontario.
- Madaras, L. and Madaras, A. (2000). *My Body, My Self, for Girls*. New Market Press: New York.
- Madaras, L. and Madaras, A. (2000). *My Body, My Self, for Boys*. New Market Press: New York.
- Shaefer, V. (1998). *The Care & Keeping of You: The Body Book for Girls*. Pleasant Company Publications: Wisconsin.

## Facilitator's Script



### Activity #1: "Remember When?"

As children reach the ages between 12 and 19, changes occur in how they think, how they interact with friends and family, and in how they look. No longer being little boys or girls, teens want to spend more time with their friends. They become more interested in themselves and what's "in" or "out." They want to make their own decisions, bend rules, take risks, and try new things. And sometimes they fall in love.

Most teens ask the question, "Am I normal?". Adolescence can be a confusing time, filled with questions, self-doubt, fears and awkwardness. But most survive these years.

Teens often worry about whether their body size and shape, feelings and relationships are normal. Talking to friends, parents or some other caring adult can be reassuring and help a teen realize that he or she is not alone and that these feelings and changes are just a normal part of becoming an adult.

Show the overhead "Am I Normal?" (A-2-a) and read it aloud. Ask parents to respond as to whether they think the teenagers are normal.

What was it like when you were a teenager? Let's take a few minutes so that you can remember. Get as comfortable as you can and close your eyes while I ask you a few questions.

For some parents, being a teenager was a very painful time. As you go through this activity, pay close attention to see if anyone appears to feel uncomfortable with the topic. If so, tell them they are free not to participate.

You may want to turn out the lights for this exercise.

Say: *Clear your mind of all the worries of the day. Relax and listen to yourself breathe. See yourself as a teenager.*

Be sure to go through the exercise **SLOWLY** so that participants will have time to imagine themselves as teens.

1. What did you look like? Were you tall or short? Did you have pimples? How did you wear your hair?
2. What kind of clothes did you wear?
3. What were some of the things you liked to do? What kind of music did you like to listen to?
4. Did you like to take risks? Did you obey the rules or break the rules?
5. Did you want to be seen with your parents? Did your brothers and sisters seem like babies? Or did your older brothers and sisters consider you to be a pest?
6. Remember your friends. What were they like?
7. Remember your first crush. Why did you like him or her? Did this person have a car? Was he or she popular? Did you like this person because your parents didn't like him or her?

Tell parents you want them to return to today and to share some of the things they remembered about their teenage years.

Turn on the lights. Discuss the questions above. List these on the chalkboard or the flip chart.

Reflect on similarities and differences of being a teen today versus when they were teens. Emphasize those characteristics that are a normal part of adolescent development.

Here are some handouts that emphasize the changes that occur during the teenage years and what makes this stage of development different from when your children were younger.

Distribute and review copies of "Developmental Stages of Teens" (A-2-b), "How Parents Can Help" (A-2-c), "Changes During Adolescence: What Can I Expect?" (A-2-d), and "Age Range of Pubertal Change" (A-2-e). Compare these handouts to the ideas the parents came up with.

Share with parents Extension publications and additional references materials that they might find useful.

**Activity  
#2:  
Word  
Search**

Use the "Adolescent Word Search" (A-2-f) to review adolescent development. If time allows, do it in class. Otherwise, use it as a homework assignment. You have the answer sheet (A-2-g); give copies of it to the participants, if you think it is necessary.

Give a prize (for example, one of the suggested reading materials) to the parent who finds the most words or finishes the word search first.

# Am I Normal

I feel kind of weird and wonder if I'm normal. My voice sounds strange. I'm tall and skinny, and my feet are big. I have zits all over my face. I can't stand the way I look. I like this girl named Mary, but I don't even think she notices me. I know she thinks I'm a nerd.

Male, age 15

I get so embarrassed when it's time to change in the locker room for PE because I don't look like all the other girls. My breasts are so big and my hips are wide. Most guys think I'm 18, but I'm only 13. Sometimes I like the attention, but most of the girls in my class don't like me.

Female, age 13

I hate it that I'm the shortest kid in my class. Even all the girls are taller than I am! At least the girls think I'm cute. But the boys make fun of me, calling me "shrimp." Am I ever going to get taller? My dad tells me he didn't have his growth spurt till he was a senior in high school. Do I have to wait that long?

Male, age 13

## Developmental Stages of Teens

Areas of Development	Early Teens: 11-13 Years	Middle Teens: 14 - 16 Years	Late Teens: 17 - 19 Years
<b>Physical Development</b>	They may show talent for sport at this stage. As they grow taller, they may become awkward all arms and legs. Hormones start to flow, which begins sexual development. Physically, girls mature earlier than boys.	They need lots of rest more than at any time since they were babies. Sexual growth continues. They may worry about their weight because looking good and being popular are important to them. Teens who are slow to grow may have low self-esteem.	Girls complete physical and sexual growth. Boys may continue to grow through late teen years and into their early 20s. Weight and being fit are concerns to older teens.
<b>Mental Development</b>	Young teens have strong beliefs. They want to be heard. They can state their thoughts more clearly. They still think more about the present than the future. They are able to sit and listen for longer amounts of time. Talent in art and music may blossom.	Teens may pay more attention to school and grades. They are becoming self-reliant. They are more responsible. Being treated fairly is important to them. They can think about things like love, respect and justice.	Older teens are able to think ideas through. They are concerned about future education and career goals. Their work habits are being set. They want to know where they fit in their family and other groups. They are able to see both sides of an issue.
<b>Emotional Development</b>	They are very self-centered. Because of the many changes in their bodies, they may have mood swings. The sweet little girl and the friendly little boy seem to vanish.	They need love and respect of parents and friends, but they may pretend not to care. They have a clearer idea of right and wrong. They sometimes behave like children when they are under stress.	They can have deep feelings of love and passion; they have a better sense of who they are sexually; they are better able to wait for results. They can work through conflicts with others and have more stable emotions.
<b>Social Development</b>	They want to be like their friends, to be normal. They fear being different. They enjoy being with friends, and they like one-on-one time with adults. They begin to doubt their parents' beliefs. Girls begin to like boys.	They need rules and structure for security, yet they rebel against rules. They may stop hugging and kissing parents, especially in public. Friendships change often. They may try alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco.	Friends are important but there is room for other relationships. Conflict with parents begins to decrease; concern for others increases. They are more independent. They enjoy some family and community traditions.

## How Parents Can Help

- Give your teens the facts about sex. If you feel uneasy talking with your teen about sex, get books or leaflets from the library, health department, school nurse or other trusted source. Read it with your teen. The Extension Service in your county may offer the programs "Girl Talk" for parents and their 10- to 12-year-old daughters or "Straight Talk for Boys" for parents and their 10- to 12-year-old sons. These programs help parents and children talk about sex.
- Give your teens the facts about tobacco, alcohol and drug use. Get booklets from your health department, the school nurse, the DARE office in the police or sheriff's department, or local groups that help children resist drugs.
- Share your beliefs about sex, alcohol and drug use with your teens. Tell them why you have those beliefs. Even though they may not agree with you, teens need to know your thoughts about these subjects.
- Tell your teens often that you love them. They may act like they don't care, but they need to know that you love them even when they do not obey you. Tell them you may not like what they do, but you still love them.
- Build your teen's confidence by noticing the things they do well. Teens are finding their talents. They may do well in school, sports, music, art or computers, or be good at fixing things. Encourage him or her to work on those talents. This is very important for teens who don't think they do anything well. Try to find something they can do. They may be good at making friends, helping around the house, or working with animals. Point out their strengths.
- Listen to your teens when they talk to you. Teens have very strong feelings. If parents say things like "You'll grow out of it" or "You'll get over it", teens may feel like parents don't care. This will stop teens from talking with their parents. Instead, say things like "It hurts to be dumped" or "I'll bet that made you feel bad". This tells teens that you understand how they feel. Let them do most of the talking.
- Pick your battles. Teens want to be like their friends and unlike their parents. They may rebel against their parents in many ways, such as their dress, the music they listen to, their hair style, or the things they do. If teens are given some choices in things that are less risky, such as how they dress and how they wear their hair, they are less likely to choose to do more risky things.
- Get to know the friends of your teens. Keep track of what your teens are doing, where they are going, and whom they are with. If teens start to hang out with a new set of friends, especially friends who make you feel uneasy, talk to your teen about why they have these friends. Talk to the teachers at school, the guidance counselor, a minister, or the Families First Family Services Counselor about your concerns. Ask if they will talk to your teen. Sometimes teens will talk to other adults before they will talk with their parents.

## Handout A-2-d

## Changes During Adolescence: What Can I Expect?

### What is Adolescence?

Simply put, adolescence is the stage of development between childhood and adulthood. Although that sounds simple enough, parents and their children between the ages of 10 and 18 don't think it's quite that simple. There are late bloomers, early bloomers, and typical-steady developers. Some children show signs of behavioral changes as early as 10, marking the beginning of adolescence, while others show signs of change later.

Your teen's own timetable is based on environment, genetics and ethnicity. For example, if your daughter is very physically active and her body fat is low, she may start menstruation later than most girls do. There is a wide range of "normal".

### What is Puberty?

Puberty is the period in the human life span when the following things happen:

- The organs of sexual reproduction mature.
- Young people experience a growth spurt--rapid changes in height and weight.
- Secondary sex characteristics appear, such as developing breasts, broadening hips and shoulders, pubic and underarm hair, deepening voice, body odor and acne.

### What Other Changes Can I Expect?

#### Cognitive (thinking)

- Shift in thinking from concrete to abstract. Ability to think about "What if...".

#### Socioemotional (feelings and actions towards self and others)

- Preoccupation with self. Concern that all eyes are on them.
- Belief that they are protected from bad things happening to them.
- Self-esteem goes up and down.
- Desire for increased independence and responsibility.
- Increase in peer influence.
- Increased risk-taking and desire for new opportunities and experiences.
- Need to experiment.
- Thoughts of "Who am I?" and "Whom do I want to become?"
- Increased need for privacy.
- Continued reliance on parents.
- Interest in opposite sex.



## Handout A-2-e

# Age Range of Pubertal Changes

## Girls

Pubertal change	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Growth spurt												
Hips broaden												
First breast development												
First pubic hair												
Menstruation												
Adult pubic hair												
Full breast development												
Armpit, leg hair												

## Boys

Pubertal change	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Growth spurt												
Testicle growth												
First pubic hair												
Penis growth												
Voice deepens												
Armpit, facial hair												
Start of sperm production												
Chest, leg, forearm hair growth												

## Handout A-2-f

# ADOLESCENCE

## Word Search

Find the words listed below and circle them. The words could be forwards, backwards or at an angle.

N R E N I L P I C S I D M I T  
S Z E P E L E Y P P B E K N E  
N N E S O N T E U E N Z C D E  
G R O O P I C B X S E K B E N  
A Y H I R O E A T P G R T P S  
K C T U T R N R Y A L R S E O  
S Z T G T O U S T R V O W N P  
A A X Y N A M J I D Y B R D O  
M L Y Z T I W E T B L I N E P  
L I M I T S T O N K I L W N U  
T R O P P U S A E R M L K C L  
Q N S E L U R B D O A P I E A  
C O N F L I C T I W F A X T R  
J S Q H Y Y K Z Y A Y F C G Y

**ACNE****CONFLICT****DATING****DISCIPLINE****EMOTIONS****EXPLORE****FAMILY****IDENTITY****INDEPENDENCE****LIMITS****MATURITY****MENSTRUATION****PEERS****POPULAR****PUBERTY****RESPONSIBILITY****RULES****SCHOOL****SUPPORT****TEENS****WORK**

