

An Overview of Adolescent Development

and the Experiences of Generation “Z”

Also called Igen, NetGen, Post-millennials, Homeland Gen, Neo-digital natives...

October 4: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEEN?

November 29: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEEN NOW?

To say someone is "adolescent", "going through adolescence", or worse "being adolescent" is to dismiss their feelings, minimize their troubles, and (if you're their parent) protect yourself from their uncompromising rage.

And when we finally are past it (which often doesn't happen until we are near 40), then we turn around and see the young and pretend that they are foreign to us, that we don't know what they're going through, that we don't get their music, their fashion, their words.

-Michael Ventura

What didn't parents or other adults "get" about you and your generation? What don't you "get" about teens today?

What may be "universal" to adolescence and what may be unique to each generation?

WORDS WE USE TO DESCRIBE ADOLESCENTS??

Wanderlust technology defining easily-influenced trendy self-conscious limbo paradox awkward chaotic unpredictable scared confident not-confident entitled smart curious fun crazy energetic confused uncertain athletic spontaneous self-conscious anxious risk-taker awkward reckless curious self-centered careless adventurous social brash rebellious short-sighted lazy craving-recognition overwhelmed inexperienced loud obnoxious immature athletic jock curious immature rebellious annoying sassy insecure smart-ass insolent rude lazy procrastinate paranoid stressed awkward loners spontaneous introverted preppy self-centered spoiled wanna-be-tough clueless awkward confused energetic confident distracted caring helpful dramatic disrespectful innovative creative driven rebellious spoiled bratty careless resilient active lazy withdrawn shy insecure easily-amazed not-amazed clueless supportive needy funny insecurities annoying loving selfish horny moody ignorance emotional self-centered selfish adventurous rebellious attention-seeking reckless awkward risk-taking overexaggerating dramatic bratty mean pleasers judgmental abusive distracted lazy angry melodramatic restless inward-focused shy dancer creative problem-solvers outgoing punky confused impressionable hungry tired moody anxious flirty promiscuous imaginative enthusiastic curious friendly nerdy band-geek quiet wallflower independent crazy weird defiant tired know-it-all rude defiant mean bored lazy busy creative hard-working responsible unpredictable naïve moody reckless sensitive athletic aware moody rebellious curious overburdened superior tired rushed seeking know-it--all awkward false blunt immature fun aggressive sneaky calm competitive hard-working stressed sweaty uncomfortable invincible confused funny amazing intelligent naïve creative dramatic adventurous lazy motivated thankful entitled loud moody poetic quiet withdrawn moody friendly pessimistic friendly opinionated blind bunt outgoing rebellious confused self-centered shy living-in-the-moment narrow-minded selfish angry know-it-all attraction ambitious lazy spirited manipulative shy trouble cool energetic gullible clown annoying obnoxious boundary-less self-conscious awkward mean opinionated impolite out-there invincible overthinking romantic hedonistic puppy-love spoiled understanding accepting moody driven confused angsty hairy awkward nervous hormones change entitled ignorant egocentric loud secluded materialistic self-conscious complaining travel-in-packs self-centered lazy tired bored distracted emotional hungry anxious sarcastic sassy oblivious privileged copycats mean vain confused insecure content curious strange dramatic rebellious confident dependent unaware naïve stubborn awkward confused single-minded unaware insecure puberty self-conscious lost content book-smart sponges trendy loud outgoing tired involved attitude sassy rebel cocky dependent sensitive confusing naïve awkward stubborn rebellious sensitive dramatic self-conscious self-absorbed emotional cocky carefree immature dependent reliant curious adventurous fearless sheltered talkative naïve awkward annoyed gullible angsty curious uncomfortable promiscuous rebellious cocky arrogant playful leadership insecure confident attention-seeking distracted dependent independent creative open-minded mean unaware conforming curious confused stubborn judgmental selfish afraid creative adventurous misunderstood independent carefree peer-influenced defiant busy change self-conscious tech-saavy tired social narrow-minded future stubborn naïve sensitive dramatic rebellious emotional cocky carefree insecure reliant curious adventurous lazy talkative shy secretive stubborn curious high-maintenance self-centered insecure moody creative adventurous adaptive social sarcastic passive-aggressive passionate active rebellious talkative needy sensitive smart-asses stubborn complicated eager mean unsure self-centered inconsiderate carefree excited positive vibrant fearless energetic hungry naïve curious entitled open-minded social misunderstood insecurities crazy busy immature curious confused naïve inconsiderate invincible emotional impressionable judgmental egocentric defiant lost stubborn aggressive unsatisfied paradoxical arrogant curious conformity rebellious self-centered dramatic energetic independent egocentric materialistic social expressive moody confused awkward discovery entitled reckless sexual stubborn sneaky fabulous selfish stressful clique emotional overwhelming inconsiderate egotistical anti-social anxious shallow experiment underdeveloped immature materialistic carefree curious violent violated vengeful misguided disrespectful impatient sleepy stubborn unapologetic

RECOGNIZE THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THEY ARE DEVELOPING

- IMPORTANT PEOPLE, THE “VILLAGE”
- RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THOSE PEOPLE
- PLACES, INSTITUTIONS, EVENTS
- COMMUNITY, CULTURAL, SOCIETAL VALUES
- CHANGES OVER TIME, GENERATIONS
- INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ALL THOSE

IN THEIR BODIES: PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- “Adolescence is longer today than it has ever been in human history....it begins in biology and ends in culture.”

-Lawrence Steinberg

- Primary Sex Characteristics=Changes directly related to reproduction. Hormonal changes: Leptin and Melatonin
- Secondary Sex Characteristics=Other physical changes of puberty
- Males (10-17) and into early 20's
- Females (7-16)
- Both experience more than a dozen physical changes leading to changes in behavior, emotions, relationships
- Asynchronicity
- Intersection (duration) with cognitive development
- Secular trend, the longest decade? (“by 2020...preschoolers might be pre-teens”)
- Average age of menarche has dropped 3-4 months every decade since the 1950's. Inversely related to wealth.
- ...average first signs of breast development from 13 to 7 or 8
- ...average age of voice change has dropped 2 ½ years since the 1960's from 13 to 10
- ---"accident hump" also dropped 3 months/decade

IN THEIR BRAINS/MINDS: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The changes in mental ability that accompany adolescence are as emotionally troubling, or even more so, than the physical changes.
-David Elkind

- Brains take much longer to develop than previously thought.
- Brains undergo a massive reorganization between 12-25....But
- The development is clumsy. (**Not unlike their bodies!**)
- New and still developing cognitive skills (logic, self-regulation, anticipating consequences, etc.) can be diminished or slowed by persistent fatigue and stress.
- The teen brain craves thrill, sensation, novelty, what's new....peeking at age 15
- What feels good, feels better in adolescence
- **Social connections** are rewarding but **social rejection** is perceived by the brain as a threat to survival.
- More than adults, teens will give in to impulse more readily.
- THEY HAVE developing (but still limited) ability to recognize perspectives other than their own.

HOW THEY SEE, PERCEIVE AND DESCRIBE THEMSELVES: IN THEIR IDENTITIES

THEY FACE DILEMMAS IN THEIR IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT:

- ❖ The discrepancies between their real, false, ideal and feared selves
- ❖ The need to belong vs. the need to be unique
- ❖ The pull to explore relationships vs. the fear of rejection
- ❖ The experience of having many friends vs. friends who do not know your real self
- ❖ The expectations of the school or peer culture vs. the family or home culture
- ❖ The strong “voice” and self-confidence of childhood vs. the self-doubt and “I don’t know” of adolescence.
- ❖ The stress associated with maintaining so many selves
- ❖ The expectations associated with becoming a woman
- ❖ The expectations associated with becoming a man
- ❖ The “false self” is confident or worldly or sanguine while the real self is childlike or innocent or trusting or fearful
- ❖ The desire to form relationships with adults as mentors vs. the reflex to reject or the fear of being judged or controlled

IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS: SOCIAL, SEXUAL

- ***“If we look closely, we will find that many young people are doing exactly what our culture expects and implicitly or explicitly tells them to do”.***
-Ruth Sidel
- They look to friends to fulfill certain “functions” they perceive parents cannot – identity and self-esteem, information, instrumental, companionate
- They experience “shocks” in social and sexual relationships they are not prepared for – betrayal, rejection, exclusion, disillusionment, slander, ridicule
- They perceive their closest relationships are on social media yet amidst constant connectedness might feel more alone and stressed (social and emotional loneliness)
- They are developing social cognition – the ability to consider other perspectives, read intention and emotion accurately, understand reciprocity in friendships
- They alternate between (intense) attempts at intimacy and sudden retreating.
- We are a semi-restrictive culture which means...confusion.

IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY

- The brain craves what is novel and new; friends are new, family may not be, but the stability and secure attachment to family is essential. You are the “container”.
- “We learn how to regulate ourselves by being regulated.” (-Lawrence Steinberg)
- Authoritative parenting balances structure, expectations, boundaries, limits, obligations and responsibilities with warmth, unconditional love and connectedness, support and interdependence.
- Traditional parenting is similar but is rooted in religious and/or cultural values.
- Secure attachment for adolescents comes when their attempts at autonomy are not met with distance or lost of relatedness.

In Their Beliefs: MORAL & POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL

And their NEED TO HAVE "FAITH" IN SOMETHING:

- Concern for what is fair or just; rules or laws can be challenged, questioned, changed
- Challenges are an attempt to develop a moral code or a political ideology
- Moral dilemmas involve loyalty, relationships, conformity, and 'grey areas'
- Separation and Individuation (consider rites of passage)
- Finding Purpose
- Finding meaning
- Understanding one's Place in the World
- Experiences of the Extraordinary
- Answers to big questions
- BELONGING and COMMUNITY
- Religiosity is correlated with resilience; consider what a religion provides
- Religious beliefs might become more individual