

Teens are Teens

Your Teen is NOT a Little Adult

Whether or not your child looks like an adult, his brain does not think like an adult. Teenage brains are not fully developed or as mature as adult brains. Research shows that a child's brain does not look like an adult's brain until he is in his mid 20s. So your child will not think or act as grown-up as you or other adults. Below are some examples. Look at them to help you understand and respond to your child. What you say can help him think better and stay out of trouble.



By St. Pete Prodigy Artist Trung

Teens May Have Different Values.

Teens may act differently than adults in the same situations because they put a different importance on things. For example, they may value the approval of friends more than the danger of doing something risky or illegal.

TEEN: "My friends think smoking dope is cool. What do you know? You are boring."



PARENT: "A lot of kids think smoking makes them cool, but what really makes you stand out is the courage to say, 'Smoking is disgusting and makes your breath stink.'"

Teens Mostly Think About Right Now.

Teens may not be able to think about the future. They may choose to not think about it. They also may consider just the short-term risks and benefits of decisions. Whatever the reason, they want things NOW and do not care about the future or the consequences.

TEEN: "So I skipped school today. It's no big deal."



PARENT: "What is going to happen if you get caught? Wasn't Ethan suspended for skipping school? I hear now he may not get into college."

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Teens May Think Only About Themselves.

Teens often act as if everything is about them or that they are unique or alone.

TEEN: "No one else understands how I feel."



PARENT: "Help me understand. I really want to."

Teens May Think They Are Indestructible.

Many teens believe that they cannot get hurt. They think that they will live forever. This can lead to foolish behavior. They may drive recklessly or think they "can handle" drinking. They may have unprotected sex because they believe they cannot get pregnant or get sexually transmitted diseases.

TEEN: "It won't happen to me. I can handle it. You worry too much."



PARENT: "It can happen to anyone. How would you feel if it happened to one of your friends?"

Teens Are Often Wishful Thinkers.

This is common among teens when they feel trapped, don't want to do something or cannot think how to get out of a problem. They seem to not think logically. Instead, they come up with a "magical" solution that adults would see as obviously unrealistic.

TEEN: "I don't need to go to school because I am going to be a pro football player."



PARENT: "OK, but you have to go to college to get experience that prove to scouts how good you are."

Teens often view the consequences of their actions as "accidental" or "surprising" when adults would easily predict a bad outcome.

TEEN: "I can't believe our teacher knew we copied our essays. We are not even in the same class."



PARENT: "The content probably sounded too familiar. Anyway, you are too clever to not create your own essay."

It is important to always listen to your child and encourage him to express himself. It is important to help him make mature, good decisions. Knowing he needs your guidance may help you understand him better and not be frustrated or critical.

For a related video, see:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/>

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