



# Adolescence is a time of turmoil

Teenagers don't need to be told that sometimes it's tough being a teen—a time of rapid physical and emotional change.

It seems that one day you're climbing trees and the next you wonder if you should shave. Suddenly you're interested in the opposite sex. Friends you've had for years don't interest you any more. You're in stormy arguments with your parents or can't stand brothers and sisters. You want to take responsibility for your actions and make decisions but adults tell you "you're still just a kid". And at other times you feel the need for the support and protection of your home.

How do you cope with all this?

Some teenagers may go on a weekend drinking binge or smoke pot; some may eat too much, or practically starve to stay thin; others may slam the door to their room and brood for hours or retire into themselves.

Any of these "escape" methods may just make a problem worse, even though they are often ways of trying to deal with the problems of growing up.

Some of these guidelines may help you cope in a positive way:

- Learn about your body and the physical changes you're going through. Con-

sult health books at school, at home or in the library. Find out about the "why", "what", "when", "where" and "how" of physical development. Or talk to parents and teachers about what they went through. They were kids once too!

- Be aware that in teen years it's more important than ever to respect your body and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

- Develop your knowledge of nutrition. Choose a variety of foods; practise moderation, particularly in fat, sugar and salt intake; and balance what you eat with what you do!

- Get enough sleep and rest. Enjoy sports and fitness programs. Take

pride in your grooming and physical appearance.

- Deciding to have sexual intercourse is an important decision which involves discussion between partners. It also involves knowing about the risks of unprotected intercourse — for example, pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted disease. It's also important to have accurate information about sex and sexuality and to be responsible for doing what you feel comfortable with at the present time.

- When you have disagreements with

parents, brothers or sisters, talk to them about what is important to you rather than becoming angry and resentful. Be prepared to respect the opinions of others just as you expect them to respect yours.

- Try to decide what your values are. They may be different from those of people around you. If they are, recognize that their values have come from experience and may also have merit.

- When you act responsibly, you'll be trusted. Gradually, you'll develop more independence.

- Decide on your priorities at school, home and in free-time activities. Find time for recreation or hobbies that appeal to you — you'll be a more attractive person when you have a wide range of interests.

- Decide what your feelings are towards friends. Being a member of a group can give companionship but occasionally friends can pressure you to do something you'd rather not do. You may have to make choices. But if you choose a course of action right for you, and be responsible

towards others, you're becoming mature. And you keep your self-respect.

- Talk over problems with parents, a trusted older person or a close friend your own age who will honor your confidence and "just listen".

- Most of all, keep in mind that adolescence is experienced by everyone. The many physical and emotional changes which occur during this period are a normal part of growing up—a time for developing independence and becoming truly responsible.

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