

Parenting Adolescents – The Most Difficult and Extremely Important Task

By

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all parents who, no doubt, have their weaknesses, but are wonderful persons nevertheless.

Abstract

Parenting adolescents is identified as probably the most difficult parenting task. Teens are preoccupied with identity crisis, eager to be independent; hasty to be adult - essentially lost, disturbed, and frightened with consequent loss of self esteem that

usually results in deep depression and a “Rebel without a cause” behavior pattern. Accelerated by rapid advances in media technology, adolescence now starts as early as 8 years of age, and has become more difficult today. Hence love, understanding and care by parents are more crucial now than before. Parents need to accept the fact that the peer group, central to adolescence culture, is a place for experimentation; and a supportive setting for achieving the two primary adolescence developmental tasks of identity and autonomy. Many issues

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ranging from drugs, reckless driving, drinking and depression to sex, pregnancy and abortion are involved. This paper is limited to just three areas: Goal setting, Conflict Management, and Raising Self Esteem.

1. Introduction

Watching newscasts of the Colorado, Αιτταλετον, Χολυμβινε high school rampage with her two teen-age children, Sharon Stiller of Chesterfield Township, like many parents, was frightened and upset, unable to explain how such a tragedy - teens killing teens in school - could happen. “*My daughter, she’s 17, was absolutely devastated. She was crying,*” says Stiller, a waitress in Warren. She was wondering how these kids could do something like that and no one could detect (beforehand) that something was wrong. Karen Martin also discussed the ινχιδεντ ιν ηερ ωεβ παγε.²

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Similar incidents of varying seriousness have happened not only across the US, but also in other countries. There are less dramatic, less publicized, but equally devastating incidents that occur all over the globe. These demonstrate gross mismanagement by parents – extreme cases of bad adolescence parenting. Thus adolescent parenting is extremely important.

According to Lynne Namka³, an

educationist and a licensed psychologist in private practice, “**Systems Theory**” says we are all connected and an effect on a part affects the whole. This concept is similar to the Buddhist concept of cause and effect, where actions produce results. Thus bad parenting, as demonstrated by the above Littleton incident, not only affects the individual adolescent, but it affects the whole system, local or global, be it family, society, country or world.

Erik Erikson⁴, one of the first social theorists, identified eight development stages in the human life cycle: infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, adulthood, maturity and old age. He believed that each stage is characterized by a certain crisis in which the individual’s needs and abilities are contrary to that of society. Old people face the crisis of meaning; maturities face the crisis of generativity; adults face the crisis of intimacy; and adolescence faces the crisis of identity. Other theories of developmental stages are mentioned in “The Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology”⁴.

This present paper is concerned with parenting adolescents, which, in our opinion, is the most difficult parenting task. Teens are preoccupied with identity crisis, eager to be independent; hasty to be adults ... in short, **they are lost**: not a kid and yet not an adult; neither here nor there. As a result, they are disturbed and frightened, with consequent loss of self