

Helping Parents Help Their Daughters Face the Challenges of Adolescence



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Why the focus on girls in adolescence?

1. Girls in adolescence experience depression twice as much as boys.
2. Girls are four times more likely than boys to *attempt* suicide. (Boys are more successful.)
3. Recent national studies show that girls during adolescence experience a significant decline in self-esteem and academic achievement.
4. Ninety percent of those afflicted with eating disorders are girls.

Important Terms

Adolescence is the period of biological, cognitive, and psychosocial transition from childhood to adulthood, usually lasting a decade or so.

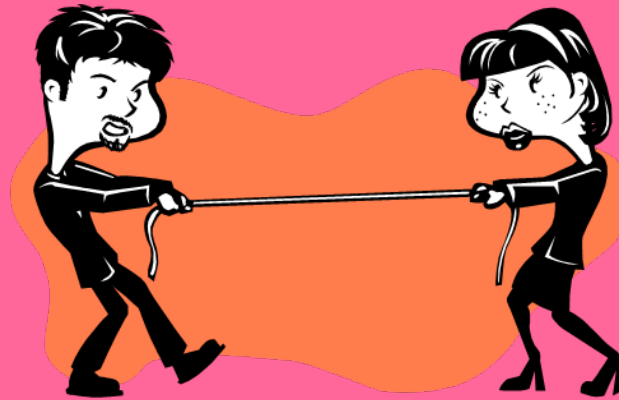
Puberty is a period of rapid growth and sexual change that occurs in early adolescence and produces a person of adult size, shape, and sexual potential.

Adolescence and puberty are not the same thing!

Adolescence for girls can be a very stressful and scary time.



There is no set time when a girl enters puberty. It usually occurs anywhere between the ages of 8–14. Girls typically begin puberty about 2 years before boys.



Studies have shown that girls are very different from boys in the development of their self-esteem. A girl's self-esteem is very closely connected to her body image.

Negative thoughts about body image can lead many girls into depression. Hormones released during puberty already cause an adolescent to have very volatile moods.

Teen suicide is also a very serious issue faced by our youth today. There is about 2 suicides per 100,000 girls ages 14-18. Suicide attempts are actually a lot higher.

Seeking Independence from Parents

- One of the most troubling things about adolescence is the child's rebellious attitude.
- Parents are no longer the largest influence on their child's life.
- Your child's peers are taking over this responsibility.

Peer Pressure

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Juvenile Delinquency (more common in boys but on the rise in girls)
- Eating Disorders (anorexia, bulimia, etc.)
- Sexual Experimentation

Susceptibility to peer pressure increases as the need to be accepted increases.

Peer pressure usually declines after the age of 14. Keep in mind that peer pressure is not always a negative thing.

What can parents do to help their daughters?

1. Parents should begin early to nurture freedom from stereotyped expectations.
2. Parents should regularly monitor their daughters' participation in school.
3. Parents should listen to their daughters' concerns about peers, family life, and adults.
4. Parents need to be aware of conflicting message about women's worth and place in our culture from schools, television and the movies.

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