

TEEN Turning Points



Adolescence and Independence

With independence comes responsibility. You have a responsibility to yourself, as well as to those who love and care about you. As you approach adulthood, you will face many tough decisions. Your parents will trust you to make those decisions responsibly and to base your decisions on the values they instilled in you.

These words almost always seem to go hand in hand. Once a teenager reaches a certain age, usually between 13 and 15, he or she wants to claim independence from the adults in his or her life. Gaining independence takes time. It occurs as the individual matures. Teenagers don't wake up one day and find themselves independent.

Teens tire of adults telling them what to do

From teenagers' perspective, they have spent many years letting grown-ups tell them what to do and what decisions to make. They feel it's time to make a few choices of their own. They no longer want their parents to treat them like a "baby." Teens resent parents for telling them where to go, how to dress, when to be home, and how to act. Later teens will realize their parents are treating them that way because parents love their children and do know what's best for them.

Growing up is hard work, and adolescence is no exception. This is a transition when teens are torn between childhood and adulthood. Until teenagers reach adulthood, they are viewed as an extension of their parents, not as individuals.

A struggle between choices, but why not both?

Adolescence is also a time when teens struggle to choose between independence and parental nurturing.

Too often, teens make the mistake of choosing one or the other. The reality is that teenagers need a little bit of both. Although they are capable of making some choices in their lives, they still need

the guidance and wisdom of their parents. Some decisions are too big for a person to handle alone. Even adults must rely on someone else sometimes when faced with a major decision.

Tips for independence

As you gain your independence, remember:

- Know your limits. Going beyond them could lead to danger.
- Act responsibly, and you will be treated as a responsible person. Demonstrating good decision-making skills early can bring you more important decisions in the future.
- Trust your parents' judgment. Don't be too quick to isolate yourself from your parents. The day may come when you really need their help.
- Build self-confidence. The lack of real responsibility can lower the sense of independence and self-esteem. Find meaningful responsibilities for yourself.

If you need help

Even though you want your independence, you can still talk to your parents; a trusted responsible adult; teacher or clergy about any problems you experience. If you need more help, you can also talk with a qualified counselor. For help in an emergency, call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310.