

THE PAINS OF GROWING

It would seem in our tech-rich, media saturated society that the sheer affluence of our nation would insure happiness for our growing teens. It is easy to minimize their pressures (from an adult perspective) and caste everything in either a motivated or unmotivated paradigm. Here are some things to be aware of as you design strategies to get your teens and pre-teens through what we liked to call "the tunnel." (children enter around 11 or so and usually come out in their 20's!)

FACING THE PRESSURE THAT I MAY LET SOMEONE DOWN

This is especially difficult when it causes me to be scrutinized - I'd rather just fit in! Even if it seems that our kids do not care a whit about what we think, don't take it personally. Sometimes the most rebellious behaviors respond best to a kind, patient response - even when you would rather throttle them!

DEALING WITH MY DESIRE TO BE ON MY OWN AND DO THINGS MY WAY

This especially difficult when you feel "oppressed!" It is a tricky thing to protect an emerging adult while at the same time letting go. And the needs of young women and young men are very different. Collaborating is key during this time, because it is almost impossible to bridge this issue.

SUDDEN OR IMPENDING EVIDENCES OF MY DISCOMFORT WITH ME

I'm a bundle of nerves because there's so much I need to figure out. Am I really a dork? Will I be able to deliver? Will someone love me? What lies on the road ahead? Do I have what it takes to be the man or woman I know I am expected to be?

MY MISTAKES OR MY AGE BEING THROWN IN MY FACE

I hate being treated like a child. "If you act grown up we would treat you like a grown-up!" Again, a "gentle answer turns away wrath." Often what we are seeing in a rebellious face is the mask of an insecure ego.

FACING THE CRITICISM OF NOT MEASURING UP TO PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS

When I fail everything falls apart. And when I fail - I am not likeable, useful, or lovable.

DEALING WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF MY FRIENDS AND MY PEERS - I WANT TO BE COOL.

My needs are changing. I need to be respected and cared for by others than my family. My parents don't understand what I am going through. We never talk any more. I have just given up (as though anyone would want to talk to a narcissistic, ungrateful ex-adolescent who used to love me.)

These things are painful, but remember, some day they WILL come out of the tunnel launch, and you will want to have a foundation for an adult friendship. I think it is easy for parents to take ourselves too seriously. Just like all teen-agers do. Whether they admit it or not!