

## Everything is Changing: Hormones, Body and Brain Development | Glen Havens, M.A.

Adolescence is a difficult transitional time. It involves physical as well as emotional challenges. "Normal" adolescence is not well defined. This lesson describes the normal milestones of adolescence, commonly occurring roadblocks and proposes two reasons explaining why it is harder to be an adolescent today than it has been in the past.

**Introduction:** There are at least three areas in which prominent changes occur during adolescence: physical (puberty), emotional (social) and cognitive (academic). Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." What we miss is the whole time frame in between.

### I. What is normal?

- A. What characteristics are commonly used to describe a parent's experience of adolescence? Narcissistic; Oppositional; Rude; Mouthy; Antagonistic; Lewd. (Ado-less-sense) we tend to think that they have "less sense" than we do. Teens can very much tell the truth and are able to tell the truth to you as well. But the format makes it difficult to listen to. In a very normal setting, they can handle the truth and they will open up to you.
- B. What is puberty and when does it occur? Most of us think of it as a physiological change in the body. Puberty can occur very early or very late. Grade school – College. Maturity & bodies. Hormonal changes – but what do they mean? \*Do parents actually talk with their kids about what puberty is? Changes in body/brain structures and roles. Brain changes in function as well as an extensive backlog of adult information.
- C. What is the primary emotional task of adolescence? Development a sense of a role. Teens want the role and rights of an adult, but want to act like a child. Erickson's stages of life development: the primary task of adolescence = separation/individuation – up until this point, the family has been nuclear and most important. They need to have an experience to themselves apart from the family. How fast do we let them step out? And how do we know if they have the appropriate skill set? And what do we do with allowing them to be independent when we still want them to behave a certain way and believe what we believe. Ex. Becoming a Christian...own personal relationship.
- D. What changes in brain structure and function need to occur if normal development is to continue?

### II. What verse can help parents as they oversee the years between childhood and young adulthood?

- A. Proverbs 22:6; Deut. 6ff

### III. Problem areas

- A. What primary mistake do adolescents make when trying to accomplish their main task of separation and individuation? They form another family or peer group without thinking.
- B. What mistakes do parents commonly make? How we guide them.
- C. How is depression often present in adolescence? Presents as anger and not sadness. "My kid was my kid and then they hit puberty."
- D. What other psychological problem areas may arise during adolescence? Psychological Disorders – Depression; Anxiety; Attention Problems; Substance Abuse; Conduct Disorders (behaviorally defiant) – helped by wilderness programs; Pervasive Developmental Disorders; Psychosis (reality-testing) first manic/psychotic episode during adolescent

**IV. Why is it harder to go through adolescence today than in the past?**

- A. Shift in family orientation from previous generations from parent-centered families to child-centered families. Parents not really knowing what is going on in the lives of their youth. And now we've gone the opposite and we've taken notice of their children and they know their kids very well. Now we have a group of self-centered, narcissistic generation. In the past, there was a level of expectations and consequences. Now we do not have structure.
- B. Post-Christian culture. In the past, we all agreed that authority held its merit. But now, because we have let go of our Christian moral roots, kids (about 9) will now say "Who made you God?" It is a philosophic problem and they assume that they are their own god. They believe that they have this choice and parents now have become naïve and these things start in grade school.
- C. Internet. These kids haven't seen it at your house, they have seen it at someone else's house. And if they haven't seen it, they have talked about it....and this starts in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

**V. What tips can parents keep in mind that will help them navigate adolescence with their children?**

- A. Don't be naïve. Too parents think "not my child" or the parents have their own issues that haven't addressed. And the kids know about it and call the parents hypocrites. Teach how to handle and deal with sex and what do you do with the conflict?
- B. Set up a God-centered family model
- C. Pay attention to your gut. If something doesn't feel right...then you're right.
- D. Evaluate behavior not motive (?)
- E. Understand that structure is internalized as love

**Study Questions:**

1. Discuss the primary emotional task of adolescence.
2. What are some common parental mistakes?
3. What changes in brain structure and function need to occur if normal development is to continue?
4. Discuss the possible reasons why adolescence may be harder today than ever before.
5. Discuss some of the problem areas of adolescence mentioned in this lesson.

**Afterword by Justin:** As your child grows, everything about them is changing – their physical bodies, social stratosphere, emotional needs, and spiritual development. Each area of their lives *must* be addressed and equipped so that they might transition into adulthood. Cognitively, we ought to be challenging their thought processes and inquire the foundations of their beliefs. You want to push them into forming their own thoughts and foundations and allow them to express who they are. Physically, we need to guide them into maturity as individual guys and girls. Some may need instruction on what it looks like to be a godly man. It may be simple things like shaving, taxes, or changing a tire. It could be as difficult as helping them learn how to communicate with the opposite sex, deal with conflict, or studying scripture on their own. Either way, it is the role and the responsibility of the family to ensure the maturity of the next generation. May we continue to train and equip our own students both at home and at church.