

What Parents Should Know ... Where's My Sweet Child?

Oh, the innocence of childhood. Where is the child who did her chores when asked...who eagerly responded when asked to help? She's been replaced by a rolling-eyed girl who wants to wear provocative clothing.

The answer to each of these questions is easy if you have a pre-teen! That child has stepped one foot into early adolescence.

All parents experience a defining moment when your loving, sweet, affectionate child appears to become a moody, bundle of raging hormones overnight. The back talk and eye rolling become more apparent and, in present time, you get the "Duh" reaction a lot. Don't despair! Just read on to understand.

While this transition is different for every child, early adolescence is usually between 10 and 15 years of age. Adolescence follows early adolescence and then moves into adulthood.

There are more changes during early adolescence than any other time of life (other than infancy). Some of the changes included physical size and strength, thinking and reasoning, feelings and emotions, and relationships with family and friends.

When you begin to understand why early adolescents behave the way they do, you can be more relaxed and maintain a sense of humor during this critical time for your child.

Even when it seems to become more difficult to raise an early adolescent, when arguments increase about clothes, music, friends, etc., you need to remember a few simple facts:

- You are the most important person in your child's life.
- Your ability to keep your sense of humor will help reduce the stress in your parent/child relationship.
- Your child's annoying or frustrating behaviors are normal and will pass because, beneath the spike or bleached hair, baggy pants and unusual jewelry is an individual who will blossom into a mature, caring adult.
- Keep your home a "safe place" for your child to be comfortable, accepted and free to express his opinions.
- Your child will grow up quickly. Make the most of this stage and recognize that your child will never be this age again.

This is a stage of contradictions, your child may say "take me shopping, but don't let any of my friends see you." Just remember, you are still very needed to guide and teach your child. Don't let their behavior push you away during early adolescence and adolescence.