

Common Developmental Tasks in Adolescence

by Beth Rogers-Doll, PhD, Psychologist

Below is a quick list of cognitive and emotional tasks that teens may or may not go through to become self-sufficient adults. Good luck surviving it!

Teens need to develop “Autonomy/Self-Concept”

- Not wanting to be hugged or kissed by parents (especially in front of cool people)
- Pursuing activities outside of the family or refusing to go on family outings
- Stating separateness:
 - “I’m not like you, Dad.”
 - “I don’t agree with your opinion.”
 - “I can’t even believe I’m related to you.”
- Demanding respect from parents (how dare they?)
- Choosing a boy/girlfriend whom parents would not approve
- Staying in one’s bedroom alone
- Becoming more secretive
- Stating parents’ faults with surgical precision
- Dressing in unusual, trendy, even creepy ways
- Adopting a striking or even frightening haircut
- Distancing with a parent, while simultaneously “glomming” onto a different relative (idealizing the relative)
- Listening to bizarre music
- Choosing the underdogs as friends

Teens need to develop “Self-Regulation”

- Sleeping as late as is humanly possible on the weekend
- Burning the candle at both ends (time management)
- Mood liability
- Unreliability
- Spending all their own money rather than saving
- Needing to be reminded about chores
- Impulsive, reckless decision making
- Misdemeanor (occasional, not habitual)
- Experimenting with drugs and alcohol

Teens need to develop skills at “Healthy Intimacy”

- Forming shallow attachments quickly and calling them intensely close
- Ditching those attachments even quicker than they were formed
- Conforming to peers (poor sense of where you begin and I end)
- Having sex, exploring sexuality
- Getting over-involved in friends’ problems
- Trading gossip

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