

Adolescence may be defined as the period within the life span when most of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing from what is typically considered child-like to what is considered adult-like (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). For the adolescent, this period is a dramatic challenge, one requiring adjustment to changes in the self, in the family, and in the peer group.

Understandably, then, for both adolescents and their parents, adolescence is a time of excitement and anxiety; of happiness and troubles; of discovery and bewilderment; and of breaks with the past and yet of links with the future.

Adolescence can be, then, a confusing time--for the adolescent experiencing this phase of life and for the parents who are nurturing the adolescent during his or her progression through this period.

According to psychologist Erik Erikson, adolescents are integrating ideas of themselves and about what others think of them. Adolescents therefore form their self-image and endure the task of resolving the crisis of their basic ego identity.

It is the phase when an individual starts idealising his real life with glitter and glamour of the world, through mediums like television, magazines and internet. They aspire to be like their perfect glamorous role models and also like to fit in his coolest group of peers; for the accomplishment of which faces peer-pressure. Therefore, spend a lot of time worrying about the choices they make, how they are seen in the world, if they upset their parents by having separate ideas. They become confused when the thoughts they have about themselves are different from what they know their parents believe.

Adolescents often feel stuck-up between their parent's authority and peer pressure. While they are in the process of self discovery and exploration (recognizing their needs and wants) they tend to become most ego-centric as ever and thus try to pull themselves off from their parents.

This age and stage usually keeps teenagers at the peak of their emotions, at the brink of their tolerance and at the turning point of their personality. This is the time when they are expected to be obedient like a child and react like an adult, making both (children and parents) very apprehensive for each other.

It is so common in an adolescent's life, when he shows sadness or anger towards his parents simply because he's not allowed to go on a night out, a late night party, a night stay at a friend's house, an out of town trip with friends.

The conflict of thoughts and interests between parents and adolescents make the later meet the sour reality of their lives.

Studies on a massive sample of adolescents have depicted that most adolescents have extremely perfect situations planned in their mind because their thought becomes



idealistic and they almost often compare their parents to others' parents for a wide variety of reasons.

The problem with adolescents is that they selectively grasp concepts. It is a stage when they get exposure to so much, and since they already have pre-planned notions in mind, they grasp what matches their ideal standards and discard all that does not conform to their perfect plans of reality.

Be it a party, a teenager is not allowed to go to, a dress she is not given permission to wear or be it a gadget, he was not allowed to buy, it all comes down to the same thing- these teenagers had planned on getting that gadget or wearing that dress or attending that party and had revolved their behaviours around and when everything gets negated, they come to point where all their thoughts reach a standstill. Wherein, end-up yelling on the parents, venting out their anger by comparing them in terms of what they didn't give permission for against what they had planned.

Tips for Parents:

- Blame the stage your children are in, not the children.
- Try explaining to your teenage child why or why not you allow or say no to something; adolescents place a high value on reasoning. They always want a reason for everything.
- Try to compromise somewhere, and meet your adolescent child halfway if they really want something.
- Don't always say 'no'. If you start doing that, your child will develop a negative view of you.
- If you say no for something, try compensating for it by allowing something else your adolescent child may enjoy.

Tips for Adolescents:

- Don't blame your parents for everything that goes wrong in your lives.
- Understand your parents, when you know they are against a particular concept, don't raise it repeatedly.
- Control your urge to go somewhere or do something that your parents have not given permission for.
- Don't use your well being to threaten your parents for permission; don't do something you will regret later for temporary joy.
- Understand that you need not get permission for everything. Analyse the things you ask for and how important they really are. Don't become too impulsive for things.

It is harder to make adolescents understand that they are wrong than it is explaining to parents how they should deal with the immature idealism at times. Sometimes the demands of adolescents are too abstract and idealistic to match reality and their wants come in conflict with what is possible in reality.

Sometimes parents are in a position where they have to say no, not wanting to at the same time, such as a financial crisis. Teenagers are often too young to be told such details and so parents have a hard time explaining why they said no, to them.

Adolescents want to be treated like they understand everything but it is often not so. They constantly compare their parents to the parents of their peers and to the parents of everyone they know just to highlight how much they want something and also at some level, to make they sound right.

The comparisons parents of an adolescent are subjected to may range from, the food they cook, to what they shop for, to the permissions they grant or refuse and to the way they guide the adolescent.

An adolescent is on the way to maturity but isn't mature already, they understand all that they want to understand and lack the rationale to look at concepts as a whole. They have idealistic standards and believe that they have thought out something in a particular way so it must most definitely turn out in that way. When reality strikes, they are bewildered and impose their idealism on their parents through comparisons about everything they do, what they do not do and what they should do.

Dr Rachna Khanna

The writer is head of the department of Holistic Medicine and Psychology and stress and lifestyle clinic at Artemis Health Institute, Gurgaon. She is a mental health professional with a medical background focused on providing individual, group and corporate counseling.