

Dinelle Faul

Clinical Psychologist

4 Ring Road, Three Rivers, Vereeniging. Cellphone: 082 686 7955



Working with teenagers

Being a teenager can be a very happy and exciting time in any young person's life, but sometimes subtle little changes can have a big impact on the happiness of you and your teenager. Perhaps your teen suddenly realizes that the way your family does things is quite different from the way his or her friends' parents do things. This is when parents suddenly hear: "But why mom? Jake and his family don't do things like that! Why can't I stay out late like him?" If parents do not know how to meaningfully handle these constant comparisons with others and the distinctive "why questions", things can change into a nightmare.

Has your teen ever been unhappy and made remarks like: "Mom, I do not fit in with the other kids at school, I do not look like them and I don't do things the way they do."? If you think about it and compare your teen's body to those of his or her peers, you might notice subtle changes: your son's voice might break, or he started growing a beard while there are no such signs visible in his friends. The opposite can also be true; while all his or her peers may show physical signs of adolescence, your teenage son or daughter might look like they still belong in primary school. These changes can surprise your teen and he / she might feel that he / she suddenly no longer fits in. It is interesting to note that adults often tend to handle teens according to how mature they look physically while they are often not emotionally ready for the responsibilities given to them. This is when your teen becomes obtuse and quiet and does not want to co-operate. Psychologists can explain these subtle changes and their impact in a teen-friendly manner to you and your teen and help both of you to better understand what is actually happening and how you can handle it sensibly.

Another subtle change that has a major impact is indicated when parents realize that their teens started back-chatting them and refuse to merely accept rules. They constantly argue with and differ from their parents and sometimes these arguments end in a door slamming behind a grumpy teenager and parents who feel totally helpless and cannot understand why their once friendly child suddenly rebels against everything. Psychologists are trained to look at the unique way your teenager changed and can help you change your communication and education style to better accommodate the growth and maturity of your teen.

The subject of future subject and career choices can also have a major impact on you and your teen. Instead of giving you a specific, well thought out answer when you enquire your teen on this subject, you get meaningless answers like: "Oh Mom! I don't know; there is still plenty of time to decide what I want to become someday." Others will tell you straight: "I don't know what I want to do with my life," or they say "I don't know, maybe I will go overseas for a year, and then I will decide what I want to study."

What parents and teens do not always realize, is that teenagers' brain function continues to develop and that is why they find it difficult to think ahead about what will be expected of them in a couple of years. Have you already been at wits end because you discovered that your teen does not realize what impact his / her decisions will have on his / her future? Remember that the brain development is still in progress, developing their use of abstract thinking, and therefore it is difficult for them to imagine what the consequences of the decisions they make now, will be. Psychologists can, in an informal and comforting way, share practical ideas to make these vital career choices without it ending in a fight.

Have you ever wondered why your young, stylish teen is suddenly afraid or ashamed to be around other people? Maybe you have heard him / her say: "Mom, I'm not going with, I have no desire to be around other people. They will just think I'm stupid." It is interesting to note that subtle changes in teenagers cause them to think that other people are just as preoccupied with their appearances as they are. Therefore it seems to them that all eyes are always on them. The impact of these subtle changes on your teen's social life can easily be treated by psychologists who are trained to find creative solutions with you and your teen. Having a teen in the house can be a time of happiness and peace and need not always be associated with conflict.