

# Understanding Teenagers

# A to Z



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101 Practical Ways to  
Motivate Your Child*

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## A

# Acceptance is required

Young people are in transition from childhood to adulthood – the greatest period of change they have ever faced and possibly ever will. During these years, everything they knew about themselves changes and it can be quite a scary [as well as exciting] time – in fact we compare adolescence to white water rafting – a bumpy ride for sure, but one that is exhilarating, feels out of control and borders on dangerous!

Having said that, people pay large sums of money for a short trip down a rapid river so it's not all bad. A pursuit not without risks,



but one that people pay to enjoy.

Adolescence is about the emergence, at times traumatic, of a new adult identity, which is continuous with the identity of the child but contains and opens up many new things.

Acceptance isn't a unique need of young people, rather it is one of the basic desires of the human race. All around us we are bombarded with the negative aspects of life, not the least of which occurs in the media. Add to that the ongoing desire for self-improvement which can manifest itself in our self-comparison to others. This can lead to negative thinking where we put ourselves down with self-talk.

In the uncertain world of an adolescent in the middle

of finding his or her adult identity, they need acceptance at this fragile time of life.

Affirmation is saying to a person, “You are valued for who you are: you are unique and special, and the world is a better place for your presence in it.” Of course, you can say this in a variety of ways. As a suggestion, test-drive one or two of these: “I think you are a great person,” “I am really enjoying seeing your character develop and mature,” “I think you will make an amazing dad/mum/father/mother,” “I am proud of who you are.” You can even show acceptance without using words! Try a smile, a gentle touch on the shoulder a nod.

The reverse message says that the planet would be better off without you. In their search for their adult persona this is a devastating message to receive that can take a long time to recover from. Both messages are communicated by words and actions, and both will be picked up loud and clear by the super-sensitive emotions of teenagers. The far better way is to learn to affirm, and purge your life, and those around you of destructive, sniping criticism.

If we think for a moment how we would feel as the receiver of negativity then I am convinced we would actively find ways to communicate acceptance all the time.

