

DELHI

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Linking love with respect

WELLNESS Know not how to handle your adolescent? Start investing in a parent-child relationship

Adolescence. The word is often treated nervously by many parents. Mood swings, irritability, peer imitation, disregarding elders, questioning conventions...the parents' list of complaints against their adolescent kids have them all and some more. Their children's gripe list is also predictably long. "My mother breathes down my neck with the dos and the don'ts", "My dad just doesn't understand me", "Why can't they understand that I want to dress up the way I feel like?", "I hate it when my parents try to force me to attend their parties", "For God's sake I am grown up!"...such exasperated outpourings from adolescents are commonplace. Simply be-

cause they are at the threshold of adulthood yet not quite out of childhood. Being at such crossroads, adolescents not only go through numerous physical changes but also undergo emotional transformation. Parents often find this child-adult transition difficult to handle and lose their cool.

"More than the children, it is important for the parents to understand the age and its demands. Parents need to be prepared to handle the age carefully. They should understand that a free and fair parent-child relationship is the best way to handle adolescence," says well-known Delhi psychologist Samir Parikh. Parikh, who specialises in adolescent psychology, however, underlines that an effort

to understand their adolescents doesn't mean giving them a free run in everything. Norms need to be set but with understanding and care, he underlines.

"What works best is a non-judgemental parental attitude. That way, many children open up to their parents instead of hiding things from them. Though many parents agree on this, they often forget to implement it," he says.

During adolescence, children frequently get conscious of their entry into the world of adults, they are also curious about things considered adult subjects. "For instance, they don't find emotional relationship with the opposite sex very easy. So if parents are non-judgemental, it helps the

children to approach them with their queries. At an age when all information is easily available, an open and easy relationship helps parents to assist them in seeing the right path," states Parikh.

Due to reasons like peer pressure or curiosity about forbidden things, many adolescents take to alcohol, drugs or smoking. Parikh says parents should look for abrupt change of behaviour in their children. For instance, changes in their eating or sleeping patterns. On finding any change, the first thing that needs to be done is to have a good talk with them without being judgemental.

If an adolescent is a single child, Parikh says that can bring in its own set of issues.



UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENCE Fair parent-child relationship is the best way to handle adolescence

Besides, the adolescent boys differ from adolescent girls in their behaviour. "Apart from these subtleties, most adolescents are the same."

Parikh, who has been conducting behavioural workshops across Delhi schools for some years now, also highlights the role of teachers in shaping the students' behaviour. "The teachers' role is extremely important. An understanding, friendly teacher can do a lot. Many things

which might not come to the notice of the parents can be spotted by sensitive teachers. That is why, we lay a lot of importance in teacher training during the workshops," he says. Student counselling centres in schools are helpful but he emphasises, "They shouldn't be the sole overseer of the subtle changes your child undergoes on the path to adulthood."

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