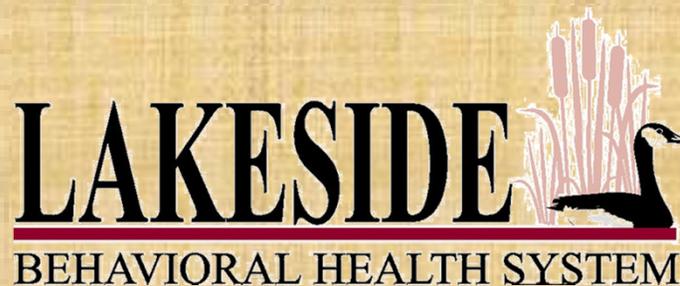


Shifting Tides

*Understanding and Supporting
Your Son Through a Time of Transition*

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The only way
to make sense out of change
is to plunge into it,
move with it,
and join the dance.

- Alan Watts

Common Parent Questions

- What is happening for our son and our family?
- What behaviors may we notice during this time of change, and are they normal?
- How do we best work with our son?
- What signs may tell us there's a problem?
- If there is a problem, where do we turn?

What is Happening?

Your son is moving toward the development of a mature, interdependent self.

Goals:

1. Develop adequate self-direction
2. Feel safe with both the familiar and unfamiliar
3. Accept both self and differences in others
4. Consider others when evaluating major issues (politics, religion, environment, human rights, etc.)

What is Happening?

Your family is trying to figure out how to adjust to life with an adolescent.

Goals:

1. Increased flexibility to permit independence
2. Shifting of parent-child relationship
3. Refocusing of parents on own life's issues (marriage, careers, aging parents, etc.)

What is Happening?

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Growth in height/weight
- Increased appetite
- Changes in sleep needs
- Puberty

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- New social environment in new school
- Learning to find place in peer group
- Wanting to spend more time with friends than with family

What is Happening?

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- More emotional than logical
- Egocentric
- Natural ups and downs
- Here-and-now focused

OTHER AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

- Academic challenges
- Athletic competition
- Growth of new interests

What May We Notice?

- Mood fluctuation
 - Normal: some irritability, impatience, rudeness
 - May be a problem: frequent reactions out of proportion to situations; intense angry outbursts
- Less interaction with parents
 - Normal: social life suddenly takes center stage
 - May be a problem: staying in room; not engaging with friends or family; complete withdrawal

What May We Notice?

- Changes in confidence
 - Normal: nervousness about new situations (sometimes even familiar ones!); worrying
 - May be a problem: anxiety interferes with functioning; panic attacks
- Academic adjustment
 - Normal: social life or extracurricular activities higher priority than school work; some difficulty concentrating due to multiple life distractions
 - May be a problem: hard time getting motivated to study; severe or sudden drop in grades; major lack of concentration; refusal to go to school

What May We Notice?

- Sleeping patterns change
 - Normal: teenagers sleep more/less naturally
 - May be a problem: sleep appears to be used as an escape
- Changed interest in activities
 - Normal: social life takes priority; easily bored
 - May be a problem: not wanting to participate in once loved activities; reduction in social activities

How Can Parents Best Help?

SUPPORT

- Set appropriate boundaries.
- Listen and be present when you do so.
- Encourage your son to talk about feelings.
- Be patient.
- Model self-control.
- Engage in self-care.

How Can Parents Best Help?

COMMUNICATE

- Listen more than you talk.
- Validate feelings and experiences.
- Avoid talking “in the heat of the moment”.
- Avoid persuasion, explaining, lecturing.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Stay on point; resist being distracted by details.
- Let go of “having to have the last word”.

How Can Parents Best Help?

MOTIVATE

- Remember adolescents are not “mini adults”.
- Understand intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation.
 - Intrinsic:
 - Driven from within
 - What parents usually wish for
 - Rarer in adolescents
 - Extrinsic:
 - Driven from outside influences
 - Freedom and approval from others are priorities
 - Typically the norm for adolescents

How Can Parents Best Help?

MOTIVATE

- Consider positive rather than negative consequences when possible.
- Recognize when privileges must be withheld.
- Allow natural consequences when appropriate.
- Be consistent and stick with what you said.
- Balance saying “Yes” and “No”.
- Seek to recognize when you are transferring your own goals/dreams onto your son.

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Embrace, don't fear, this time of transition.
- Seek support when necessary.

Suggested Reading

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

The Blessing of a B-, Wendy Mogel, PhD

Strong Mothers, Strong Sons, Meg Meeker, MD

Teen-Proofing, John Rosemond

The Good Enough Teen, Brad E. Sachs, PhD

Masterminds and Wingmen, Rosalind Wiseman

Raising Cain, Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson

Boundaries with Teens, Dr. John Townsend