Adolescent Development Explained: Social Connections

Webinar
Wednesday, September 25, 2019
Welcome

- Diane Foley, M.D., FAAP, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Population Affairs

- Speakers:
  - Terrinieka W. Powell, Ph.D., associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and core faculty at the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health
  - Monica Longmore, Ph.D., social psychologist and professor of Sociology at Bowling Green State University
Adolescent Development Explained

• Adolescence is a time of enormous transition.

• This resource discusses changes that are normal and necessary in adolescence, different ways adolescents experience these changes, and how adults can support healthy development.

• It builds on The Teen Years Explained: A Guide to Healthy Adolescent Development, developed by the Center for Adolescent Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Pre-Webinar Question: What questions do you have about social relationships in adolescence?
SECTION 1: Taking on the Social Roles of Adulthood

• **Social development** is a process that helps adolescents move from the limited roles of childhood to the broader roles of adulthood.

• Adolescents expand their social roles when they join a school club or get a summer job. Adolescents may also become interested in dating.
Factors that Can Affect Social Development

• **Physical changes** may seem to signal that an adolescent may be entrusted with greater responsibilities, but that may be the least reliable way to determine what roles they can handle.

• **Cognitive and emotional development** help adolescents have deeper conversations and express their emotions better.
SECTION 2: Building New Social Connections

• By expanding **social circles**, adolescents build social networks and form stronger relationships.

• Acceptance from peers is especially important to adolescents. They may change how they think, speak, dress, or behave to gain approval from **evolving friend groups**.
  - Sometimes adolescents engage in **risky behaviors**, including sexual activity and substance use, because they think it will earn them greater acceptance from peers.
Negative and Positive Peer Pressure

• Peer pressure can take the form of encouragement, requests, challenges, threats, or insults.

• Positive peer groups can help youth learn and practice healthy relationship skills, such as cooperating, resolving conflicts, and sharing.
Navigating Romantic Relationships

- Exploring romantic relationships may be considered the **hallmark of adolescence**.

- Youth in relationships are still developing their sense of self and learning about their likes, dislikes, and values.

- Youth who date may engage in risky behaviors, such as having sex at an early age, or find themselves in unhealthy or violent dating relationships.

- Adolescents may also have unrealistic expectations or ideas about relationships from media or friends.
SECTION 3: New Ways to Interact

• **Ways to interact** are changing with technology.
  ▪ Text messaging, social networking platforms, blogs, email, and instant messaging all can be important tools for youth interactions.

• It is not uncommon for youth to have virtual friendships with peers they have never met face-to-face.

• It is important for adults to help adolescents navigate in-person interactions and to monitor social media use.
Social Media Use in Adolescence

• **Social media** presents many risks and benefits:
  - Curtails nonverbal communication and cues
  - Is another forum for bullying
  - Helps adolescents stay connected
  - Provides a platform for adolescents to express who they are

• Adults should help adolescents think deeply about what they post on social media and set up boundaries for social media use.
SECTION 4: How Parents and Caring Adults Can Help

• Set examples of healthy relationships.
• Monitor and get to know adolescents’ friends and dating partners.
• Encourage participation in activities adolescents care about.
• Exhibit empathetic behavior.
• Build connections by talking to adolescents about your interests and learn about theirs.
• Teach adolescents how to deal with peer pressure.
Tips for Talking with Adolescents

• Acknowledge what adolescents have to say.
• Let adolescents know when it is important to share sensitive information with you.
• Discuss boundaries and expectations in relationships with others.
• Set online boundaries.
• Teach and model good communication skills.
Questions?

For more information about Adolescent Development Explained:

https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/explained/index.html

Recordings and slides are coming soon: