

## FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND A TEENAGER

My name is Andreja Dragovan. I'm a teacher at Bistrica ob Sotli Primary School, Slovenia and we are involved in the project of Health Promoting Schools for eighteen years. At first we were part of the European Network of Health Promoting Schools, later on we joined the Slovenian Network of Health Promoting Schools. I have 29 years of practice in teaching ten- to eleven-year-olds. In this article I like to present the cooperation with parents in my class.

### INTRODUCTION

Good cooperation between home and school is an important indicator of educational work. Qualitative partnership is based on trust, respect and mutual help. Good cooperation between parents and school is a contribution of today's democratic, student-friendly school, which enables a dialog of mutual cooperation. Therefore school and home in a partnership are equally responsible for a child's development and progress.

Carefully planned work with parents, adequate topics and forms of work are undoubtedly a part of teacher's working duty, too. I've got many years of experience in teaching 10-year-olds. This school year I remained the class teacher of my last year's class. I'm teaching them in the fifth grade, too. I noticed changes among them very soon. They aren't the same as they used to be. Their relation to me, schoolmates and their parents has changed.

I made a decision for the next subject of our class parent teacher conference to be *Adolescent developmental tasks or to better understand the juvenile*. I wanted to present some psychological characteristics and processes that are typical for most teenagers. We call them the development characteristics, which means that their occurrence in this period is something normal. The purpose of the meeting was to help parents better understand their teenager, his/her behaviour, needs and moods.

### THE PRESENTATION OF THE WORK WITH PARENTS

Since the workshops work best with subjects where parents have a lot of experience, I decided to shape our meeting very actively. Divided into groups parents wrote the changes observed in their children on the posters. The following changes were most frequent:

- They don't obey.
- They become individuals.
- They spend much time in front of the mirror.
- Girls say they are too fat.
- They compare themselves with their schoolmates (clothes, cell phone, computer etc.)
- They fight parents, siblings.
- Everything annoys them.
- They've grown up.
- They say everything hurts them. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Changes in children, noticed by their parents.



Some theoretical points were also presented to parents. I pointed out how genetics and environment contribute to the fact that the individual moves forward and passes from one life period to another. Early adolescence, which lasts from 10 to 14 years, is one of these times. Children are not able to provide for their own survival, so they depend on others, protected by their parents and attached to them. During that period they make life-important decisions to:

- create different and more mature relationships with peers;
- accept their body;
- shape emotional independence from parents;
- prepare for the profession and a responsible role in society.

Knowing about physical development of a teenager is very important for understanding the psychological characteristics of adolescence. This is time of rapid and turbulent changes in the body: accelerated growth, sexual development, increased action of certain hormones, hair growth, unusual proportions between body parts etc. All of that affects teenager's mood. Youngsters direct much attention to their physical action; they are very sensitive and critical of their body image, which is compared with the ideal body figure as shown by the media.

Girls in particular are concerned about physical changes and therefore show lower self-esteem and increased irritability. Because of rapid and uncoordinated growth they have problems with coordination.

Due to intense hormonal changes sentimentality is distinctively increased, which results in:

- increased sensitivity which did not exist before;
- unfamiliar emotions;
- fast mood changes;
- possibility to love and hate a person at the same time.

Special handling is demanded with momentary or chronic anxiety, uneasiness. This is undefined fear, unpleasant tension of unknown source. It's accompanied by various physical signs: trembling, headaches, stomach aches, introversion etc.

The reasons for anxiety are:

- unresolved new sexual needs;
- doubts about one's abilities;
- concerns about status and reputation among peers;
- pressure from school and parents.

There are new needs; those already existing become more emphatic. The most important among them are:

- the need to belong to a group of peers;
- the need for independence;
- the need for acceptance and emotional support;
- the need for approval of one's values, attitudes, opinions;
- the need for sex.

The processes of independence, separation from parents and integrating into peer groups are happening in adolescence. Gradually teenagers are separated from their parents and get attached to the chosen life companion and later to their children. This is how full autonomy is achieved.

Shaping the identity is the central and most important process in this period. It is formed in several different ways. Juveniles consciously and unconsciously watch other people - models and learn from them; these are most often their peers, role models in the media, parents and teachers. The perception of who they are is built up based on what other people think of them. Teenagers often experiment and try themselves in different roles. It is important for them to have many choices and to learn about multiple roles they can take in their life. Consequently, the decisions made in the end will be stronger.

We concluded with a summary of developmental tasks of youth period. (Figure 2)

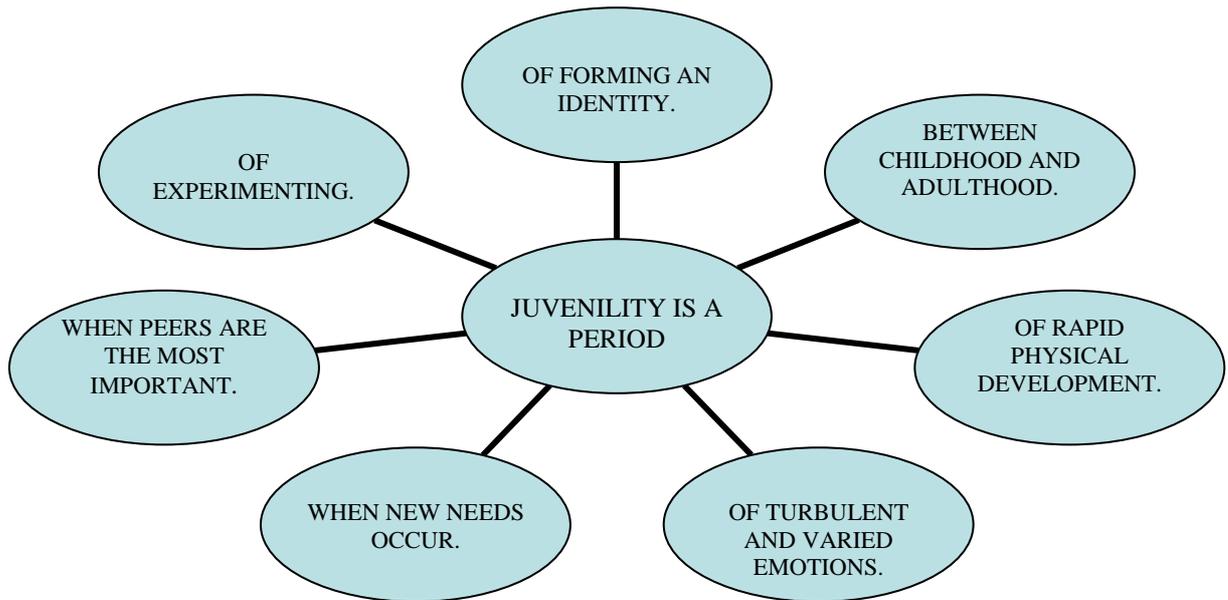


Figure 2: Developmental tasks of youth period.

## SUMMARY

Although there were doubts and fears present at the run-up of this form of parental meeting, in the end parental feedback was very encouraging. Parents liked the fact that they had been active collaborators. They could share their experiences with other parents. After clear and quick reference the group work was taken up quickly. Parents developed communication and relationship or tolerant attitude, which is very important in our daily work with young people.

Wishing to attract parents to cooperate, that they will gladly come to school in the future, I cooperated with our school counsellor worker and theoretically I was well prepared for the topic. Being given the positive response of parents I decided to continue with such work with the following generations of parents due to good mutual relations and the awareness that together we can help children. Their transition from childhood to adulthood will be easier for us to understand if we have theoretical knowledge of developmental tasks of youth period.

## SOURCE REFERENCES

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