

The Vulnerability of Adolescents

Did you know?

Adolescence is a time of both great opportunity and increased risk. It is a time of dramatic changes including in physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. The following information provides insight into this exciting time and why it is a vulnerable stage in kids' lives.

- Adolescents are preoccupied with how others see them. They are back at centre stage and they think all eyes are on them. They are highly sensitive to the judgment of others. Along with hormonal changes, this also is demonstrated in their moodiness.
- Adolescents are consumed with the need for acceptance and the feeling of belonging with peers. They may put up with being treated poorly in an effort to maintain acceptance by peers. This can include staying in unhealthy relationships.
- Adolescents are willing to take risks in order to gain acceptance from peers, even if it conflicts with family values.
- Adolescents are likely to make choices based on immediate consequences and peer acceptance rather than future consequences or adult judgment.
- Adolescence is a period when kids are the most sensitive and reactive to stress.
- Adolescents, especially girls between the ages of 11-19 years, are the most at risk to be sexually exploited (Statistics Canada, 2005).
- Adolescence is a time when teens are most vulnerable to victimization online and offline.
- Conversations with adults about relationships can be insightful for adolescents and very beneficial.
- Adolescents feel loss as deeply as adults do.
- Heartbreak can deeply shake their confidence.
- Research shows that adolescents who are extremely sensitive to rejection are at a higher risk of becoming compliant and engaging in behaviour they are not comfortable with in an attempt to keep the relationship going.



The Vulnerability of Adolescents (cont'd)

- Research also shows that adolescents' limited experience and emotional skills can make them especially vulnerable to emotional manipulation. This can present itself in areas where there is a high risk of others taking advantage of their positive outlook on life. They are especially vulnerable to someone using guilt or shame to manipulate their behaviour.
- Adolescents are very vulnerable to flattery about their maturity level or someone that tells them they are special.
- Adolescents are typically sexually curious and easily sexually aroused.
- The risk-taking and rebellion occurring during adolescence is part of their need to establish their identity.
- Adolescents' behaviour during this time is not indicative of who they will be as adults.

Research shows that romantic relationships cause the greatest source of stress for adolescents because of the powerful feelings generated.

