

The Journey Through Adolescence

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One of the toughest jobs in the world is being a teenager. Everything is in transition. Everything is intense—even apathy.

Kids on the brink of adulthood have to cope with inconsistencies and conflicts. The desire to be special and different clashes with the need to belong and fit in. The desire for independence collides with the aversion to self-reliance and personal responsibility.

Here are five suggestions to improve the journey through adolescence:

1. **Be yourself.** Mindless conformity is a prison. Express yourself authentically and don't be afraid to stand out. But don't dress or behave in extreme ways just to be different or to prove you can. You don't need orange hair, a nose ring, or tattoos to be special. In the end, it's more important to be respected than noticed.
2. **Don't expect too much or settle for too little.** Don't expect anyone else to make you happy, but don't allow others to treat you badly. Hang out with people who bring out the best in you, and be the kind of person who brings out the best in others.
3. **Treat responsibility as a privilege, not a penalty.** Dependability and self-reliance are the tickets to freedom and independence. Don't waste energy resisting what you *have* to do. Win trust by doing what you *should* do.
4. **Look ahead.** The choices you make today will shape tomorrow. Every act has a consequence. Pleasure lasts for a moment, but happiness lasts much longer. Be careful; just because it feels good doesn't make it good.
5. **Take charge of your life.** Your life is your ship; be the captain, not a passenger. Figure out what needs to be done to improve your life and make it happen. Your attitudes are more important than your aptitudes. You can't control what happens to you, but you can control what happens in you. Don't whine, win.