

Joy:

Preadolescent behavior often drives us parents crazy...but why ?

We managed to get through the "terrible twos" and the "fearsome fours" and all those other stages. Why should preadolescence cause us such pain?

Because we're losing a child.

Intermediate marks the beginning of that long process that transforms our cuddling, temperate, enthusiastic child into a compassionate, well-rounded, energetic adult. The transformation takes many years, and those years begin at this stage of preadolescence. We are losing a child; something that has been precious and secure to us is slipping away, and we're not sure what comes next. Preadolescents feel the same way: something that was precious and secure to them, their childhood, is slipping away and they're not sure what comes next, either. A few resist growing up, but most are eager even if insecure about their age.

What comes next is as exciting and interesting and demanding as childhood, it's just different. There are many joys to experience during preadolescence and adolescence. There are opportunities for actual conversations rather than simple dialogues; you will be impressed by your preadolescent's ability to handle more complex social interactions; their ability to think and imagine and interrelate ideas will often astound you. The fact is they're not growing up physically, they are maturing, and this is itself is a joy.

At the same time, we will be experiencing turbulence. But knowing that it is normal and natural should make the experience somewhat easier.

Preadolescence, once it is understood and prepared for, can be as happy and as easy to deal with as other developmental stages. Our good-natured equilibrium during these years will ease the pain the young person is experiencing.

Now is as good a time as any to give your preadolescent a hug...