

Information Brief

Teenagers Are Very Different Than Adults

It is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that teenagers are mini-adults. Physically, teens are very much up to adult size. In dress, it is very difficult to differentiate between the two groups, and in mannerism, young people can fool you.

In reality, teenagers are very different than adults. The development tasks they must master are different than adult tasks. A teen's thought process is very different than an adult's. How a teenager reacts to the consumption of alcohol is also different.

These core differences between teens and adults are especially important in relation to the use of alcohol.

One third of the teen population are non-alcohol consumers, but the remaining two-thirds do drink alcohol. Approximately 58 percent of teens progress through the adolescence and experience normal adolescent growth. The remaining 42 percent progress through this period with varying degrees of growth turmoil. Without question, alcohol consumption is a part of life for the 42 percent of the teens that experience turmoil during the teen years.

On the road to adulthood, teenagers need to accomplish these developmental tasks:

- Adjust to the physical changes of puberty.
- Establish an increasing degree of independence from their parents with a positive sense of competency.
- Achieve effective social and working relationships.
- Select a career or continue their education
- Develop values.
- And most important, develop a sense of identity. The question of "Who am I?" is essential. That question is answered by experiencing feelings, different roles and lifestyles, and, finally, by breaking the child/parent dependencies. Teenage tasks are different from adult developmental tasks but equally important is that teens think differently from adults.