

controversial again.

The next time one of my teenagers started a similar conversation, I decided to try to trick myself. Throughout the entire conversation, I told myself over and over again to act as if this were not my teenager but rather someone else's child. I found this actually worked quite well, and I was able to listen without interrupting. I continue to use the system, sometimes with more success than at other times.

—Mother of four

Over the past several decades, changes have taken place within the family microsystem that have important implications for adolescent health. Higher rates of divorce and remarriage, increasing numbers of single-parent or blended families, and greater percentages of working mothers have become characteristic of contemporary United States society. Changes in family structure and parent employment have resulted in adolescents having more time unsupervised by adults and increased time alone or with peers. Decreased adult supervision may result in more risk-taking behaviors, such as substance use and sexual intercourse, and decreased opportunities to develop a supportive relationship with parents. Adolescents who feel close to their parents show more positive psychosocial development and behavioral competence, less susceptibility to negative peer pressure, and lower tendencies to be involved in risk-taking behaviors ([Smith, Stewart, Peled, et al, 2009](#)).

Peer Groups

For the majority of teenagers, peers assume a more significant role in adolescence than they did during childhood. The peer group serves as a strong support to adolescents, individually and collectively, providing them with a sense of belonging and a feeling of strength and power. The peer group forms the transitional world between dependence and autonomy.

The peer group has an intense influence on adolescents' self-evaluation and behavior. Peers serve as credible sources of information, role models of new social behaviors, sources of social reinforcement, and bridges to alternative lifestyles. To gain acceptance by a group, younger adolescents tend to conform