

# Current Issues I in Adolescence

## Overview

The path from childhood to adulthood is relatively smooth for most adolescents. However, for some this path is strewn with obstacles.

Teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual abuse, and alcohol and substance abuse are some of the current issues facing adolescents.

Adolescents today are more sexually active than previous generations. This raises the issues of teenage pregnancy and parenthood and the impact of this on the education and economic status of the mother, father, and infant. Increased sexual activities also lead to the increased incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers.

Sexual abuse is experienced by both boys and girls and may account for many emotional, social, and physical problems of adolescence.

Sexual harassment is being recognized as a growing problem in the high school. Harassment has a negative effect on both perpetrator and victim.

Children are experimenting with alcohol and drugs at earlier ages. They are unaware of the negative impact substance abuse may have on their lives, especially alcohol related accidents that are the leading cause of death among teenagers. The difference between experimentation and addiction are described.

Authorities in these current issues of adolescent development describe the motivation of young people to engage in these activities. Suggestions for dealing with these obstacles to normal development are presented by these authorities.

## Questions To Consider

1. What impact does pregnancy have on the futures of the teenage mother and father, and their infant?
2. Why do some teenage mothers decide to keep their babies?
3. Why are younger teenagers at greater risk of contracting AIDS than older teenagers?
4. Does informing teens about contraception increase sexually activity?
5. What effect does sexual abuse have on the adolescent?
6. How widespread is sexual harassment in schools?
7. Why are many adolescents likely to use alcohol and drugs?
8. What interventions are most effective in combating these issues?

## Vocabulary

Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

**Conceptual abilities** Abilities related to thinking, reasoning and learning.

**Low birth weight** Newborns who weigh less than 2,500 grams (5 1/2 lbs.).

**Mentors** Adults who share their special skills and experience with adolescents.

**Perpetrator** Person who performs or commits a crime.

**Promiscuous** Making little distinction among sexual partners.

**Sexual harassment** Unwanted advances of a sexual nature.

**Small for gestational age** Babies who are born small for the time since conception.

**Substance abuse** Excessive use of legal or illegal drugs.

## Instructional Objectives

When you have successfully completed this module, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the possible effects of pregnancy on health, economic, and educational status of teenage parents.
2. Describe the supports which enable the teen parent to successfully parent.
3. State reasons adolescents are at increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD).
4. Describe the impact of sexual abuse on the adolescent victim.
5. Describe the supports which enable the adolescent victim of sexual abuse overcome the experience.
6. Describe the effect of sexual harassment in school on both harasser and victim.
7. Describe the effects of alcohol and substance abuse on the adolescent.
8. Name the predictors of substance abuse in adolescence.
9. Describe the supports which enable adolescent alcohol or substance abusers to overcome their addiction.

## Self-Test

After studying the objectives and watching the video, take the self-test to check your progress.

Select the phrase which best completes each statement:

1. \_\_\_\_ In the United States
  - a. 5% of teenage girls become pregnant.
  - b. 95% of teen mothers keep their babies.
  - c. the birth rate among 16 to 19 year old girls has increased.
  - d. most teen pregnancies result in live births.
2. \_\_\_\_ Teenage mothers are
  - a. at minimal risk for complications at birth.
  - b. least likely to bear low birth weight infants.
  - c. most likely to live in poverty.
  - d. likely to complete their high school educations.
3. \_\_\_\_ Sexually active teenagers are likely to
  - a. use contraceptives.
  - b. contract sexually transmitted diseases.
  - c. have only a single sexual partner.
  - d. know what to do to prevent STD.
4. \_\_\_\_ Select the statement that is most true about the sexual abuse of adolescents.
  - a. Both boys and girls may be sexually abused.
  - b. The sexual abuser is most likely to be a stranger.
  - c. Sexual abuse has little impact on the victim's learning in school.
  - d. The abused adolescent feels no shame or guilt.
5. \_\_\_\_ Adolescent victims of sexual abuse may overcome the negative effects of the experience if
  - a. parents deny the experience happened.
  - b. parents recognize the futility of therapy.
  - c. adults help the adolescent recognize the adolescent was not responsible for the act.
  - d. the adolescent believes he or she is powerless.

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6. \_\_\_\_ Adolescents who experiment with drugs

- a. all become addicted.
- b. are doing so at an older age.
- c. are most likely to be poor.
- d. do so because of peer pressure to try.

7. \_\_\_\_ Sexual harassment in high school

- a. causes victim no embarrassment.
- b. has little effect on victim's learning.
- c. occurs when harasser feels insecure about own sexuality.
- d. makes harasser feel weaker.

8. Describe one community support program which assists the teenage parent.

9. List five predictors of alcohol or substance abuse.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

10. Next to each statement place a T if true or F if false.

- \_\_\_\_ a. Alcohol related accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers.
- \_\_\_\_ b. In low income neighborhoods the use of designer drugs is on the rise.
- \_\_\_\_ c. Anti-drug campaigns have been effective in reducing drug use among adolescents.
- \_\_\_\_ d. Teens are aware of the negative impact drugs and alcohol have on their lives.
- \_\_\_\_ e. Peer counseling is an effective self-help method.
- \_\_\_\_ f. Substance abuse increases emotional responsiveness.
- \_\_\_\_ g. Recovering abusers need help to recapture missing developmental pieces.
- \_\_\_\_ h. Alcohol and substance abusers have clouded conceptual abilities.
- \_\_\_\_ i. When sober, abusers can easily recapture missing years.
- \_\_\_\_ j. Abusers are non-responsive to the environment.

11. Describe four supports parents need to provide to help their adolescents overcome alcohol and substance abuse:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_