

# Parent-Adolescent Relationships: Factors Contributing to the Changing Relationship and Ways Parents Can Improve the Relationship

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# Overview

Pros of Positive Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Adolescent Development

Changes that Occur From Parent-Child to Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Additional Factors Affecting Parent-Adolescent Relationship

Conflict in Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Ways to Improve the Relationship

# Pros of Positive Parent- Adolescent Relationships

- ▶ High-quality and positive parent-adolescent relationships:
  - ▶ Predict lower levels of adolescent depression (Aseltine, Gore, & Colten, 1998)
  - ▶ Predict fewer delinquent behaviors (Hair et al., 2005)
  - ▶ Protect against antisocial behaviors in families with marital conflict or disruption (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994)

# Adolescent Development

- ▶ Adolescence is a period of rapid cognitive, biological, and psychosocial changes (Branje, 2018)
- ▶ Increased activation in the limbic structures
  - ▶ Increased sensitivity to negative emotions and increase in emotion lability (Forbes and Dahl, 2010)
  - ▶ Heightened reward sensitivity (Soenens, et. al, 2019)
- ▶ Maturing prefrontal cortex (Soenens, et. al., 2019)



## Adolescent Development

Adolescents are confronted with a variety of new stressors (Eccles et al., 1993)

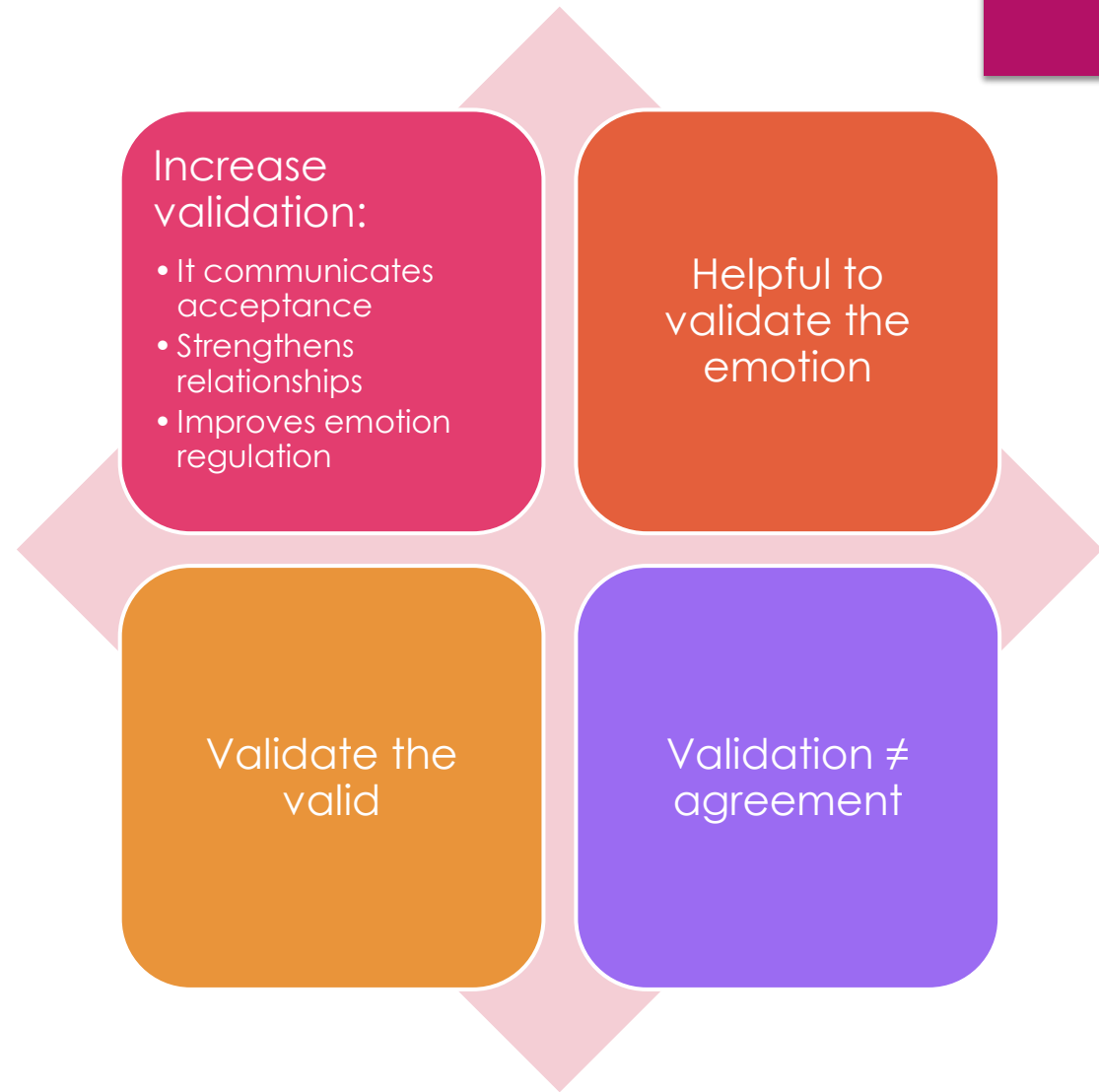
Adolescents increasingly strive for autonomy (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2002)

# Changes that Occur in the Relationship

- ▶ Parents and adolescents must reorganize the relationship, leading to:
  - ▶ More egalitarian relationship
  - ▶ Increased interdependence
  - ▶ Increased responsibilities for adolescents
  - ▶ Find balance between autonomy and privacy

(Branje, 2018)

# Ways to Improve the Relationship

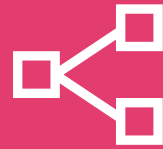


# Ways to Improve the Relationship

- ▶ Types of Invalidating Statements
  - ▶ Giving advice (“You should talk it through with her.”)
  - ▶ Problem solving (“I’m going to talk to their parent!”)
  - ▶ Telling the person how to, or not to, feel (“Oh, don’t be sad! You should be glad you don’t have that toxic friend anymore.”)
  - ▶ One upping the person (“Oh you think that’s bad! Wait until you hear about \_\_\_\_.”)
  - ▶ Making it about you (“I get so mad when that happens to me.”)



# Changes that Occur in the Relationship



Despite changes in interaction patterns, individual perceptions in the quality of relationship remain stable



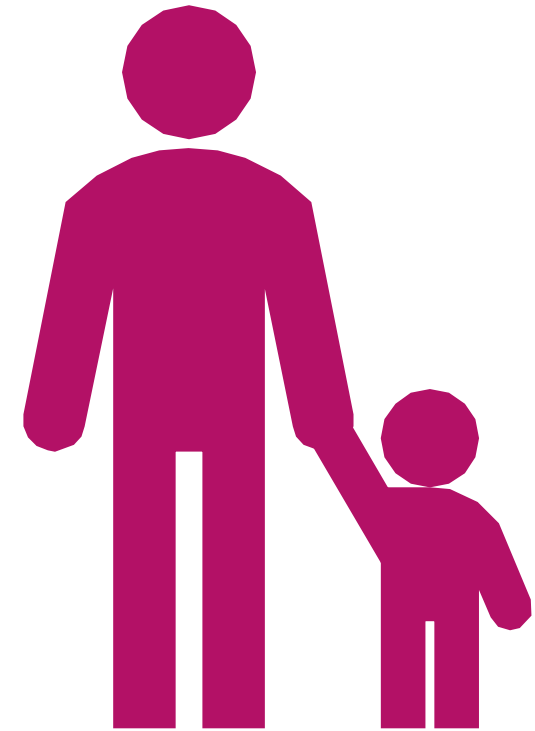
Most adolescents had the same type of relationship with their parents throughout adolescence

# Factors Affecting Parent- Adolescent Relationship

- ▶ The parent–youth relationship is linked with **parent stress** (Visconti et al. 2002) and **parenting practices** (Hair, et. al., 2008), including:
  - ▶ parental awareness
  - ▶ parental monitoring
  - ▶ supportiveness
  - ▶ strictness

# Parent Stress

- ▶ High parent stress is associated with (Crnic et al. 2005; Visconti et al. 2002):
  - ▶ Poor child and adolescent adjustment
  - ▶ Increased risk for:
    - ▶ child psychopathology
    - ▶ substance use
    - ▶ risk behaviors
  - ▶ Use of more maladaptive parenting behaviors
  - ▶ Changes in parents' perceptions of their child's behaviors



# Ways to Improve the Relationship

## Parent Stress

Mindfulness-based interventions may represent a promising approach for reducing parent stress and improving parenting and child outcomes (Dumas 2005; Duncan et al. 2009). Have shown to:

- decrease distress and over-reactivity to events
- Increase ability to response to events in ways that one choses rather than automatic reactions
- Increase positive parenting
- Increase closeness and bonding in parent-adolescent relationships

Overall, it helps parents be more present in their interactions with their teen and more aware of adolescents' reactions and their own emotions

# Conflict in Parent- Adolescent Relationships

- ▶ Sources of conflict:
  - ▶ Adolescents' and parents' discrepant expectations on (Soenens, et. al., 2019; Branje, 2018):
    - ▶ appropriate behavior
    - ▶ Changes in social expectations
    - ▶ autonomy
    - ▶ Social roles

# Pros of Conflict

The conflicts are a means to renegotiate relationship changes

Can help:

- Realign the relationship towards a more egalitarian one
- Adolescents become more autonomous



Mutually satisfactory renegotiation decreases conflict and increases closeness

# Cons of Too Much Conflict

Too many conflicts puts adolescents at risk for poorer well-being and psychosocial adjustment



Greater parent-adolescent conflict has been associated with:

↑ externalizing and internalizing problems

lower self-esteem

more risky behavior

more substance use

poorer school adjustment

# What Occurs During Conflict Matters

- ▶ Emotional variability during conflict is positively related to the quality of parent–adolescent relationships
  - ▶ Mother–adolescent dyads with greater emotional variability during conflict interactions reported:
    - ▶ better relationship quality over time
    - ▶ more maternal support for autonomy
    - ▶ less frequent conflict
    - ▶ adapt more efficiently to adolescents' increasing needs for autonomy

(Branje, 2018)



# Ways to Improve the Relationship

- ▶ Increasing emotional variability during conflict
  - ▶ Greater emotional variability during conflicts was related to:
    - ▶ Higher disclosure from adolescents (Branje, 2018)
    - ▶ More open communication patterns
- ▶ Modeling conflict resolution and emotion regulation:
  - ▶ Adolescents of parents displaying emotion regulation difficulties reported more problems with regulating their emotions (Buckholdt, Parra, and Jobe-Shields, 2014)
  - ▶ Positive problem solving and compromise related to fewer externalizing and internalizing problems (Tucker et al., 2003; (Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993)

# Ways to Improve the Relationship

- ▶ Add in family rituals (Steinberg, 2001; Hair, et. al., 2008)
  - ▶ Presence of family rituals related to:
    - ▶ adolescents' sense of identity
    - ▶ greater general self-esteem in young adults
    - ▶ lower levels of conduct disorder
    - ▶ increase family cohesion

## Ways to Improve the Relationship

- ▶ Strategic use of Emotion and Attention (SEA) Protocol
  - ▶ developed by colleagues and based on principles from Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
  - ▶ Occurs in two phases:
    - ▶ First phase goal: increase attention for acceptable behaviors and increase positive regard
    - ▶ Second Phase goal: intentional teaching and contingent follow through

# SEA-First Phase: Adding in Praise

- ▶ Find opportunities:
  - ▶ Set a goal for a number of times per day (5, 10, 15, 20)
  - ▶ At least once in the morning
  - ▶ At least once after school
  - ▶ At least once in the evening
  - ▶ Shoot for one per hour
  - ▶ Goal is ratio of 5:1
- ▶ Examples of Praise:
  - ▶ Great job getting up and ready on your own!
  - ▶ Thanks for telling me about your day!
  - ▶ I really enjoy these conversations!
  - ▶ Thank you for doing the dishes! (Say it EVEN when it is their chore!)
  - ▶ I appreciate you asking before going to your friend's house!

# SEA-First Phase: Positive Regard



Try to have positive regard during one 5 to 15 minute period per day

Could be on the way to or from school or an activity  
Pick a time that is convenient so you are more likely to be consistent and successful doing daily  
Avoiding criticism, commands, and questions during this time



Show physical affection (closer proximity, eye contact, smile, inviting tone)



Provide verbal positive regard (e.g., "Good morning!" "You look great!" "I love you.")

## SEA-Second Phase

Eliminate emotion when addressing problem behaviors

- Teaches them how to be when they are receiving consequences
- Models how to handle difficult situations

Keep in mind you are always teaching your child how to behave



Questions or  
Comments?

# Upcoming CE Presentation

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- ACT Mindfully: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with Children & Adolescents

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