



Social Issues

Adolescents – a difficult age



Definition:

An adolescent is someone who has reached puberty but is not yet an adult. Adolescence is the period from puberty to adulthood in human beings.

A difficult age...why?

Today adolescence is becoming a crucial challenge in many societies. Young people express new expectations that the traditional systems are not able to meet: freedom, self expression, equal opportunities, better education, a good job, the ability to find a creative role in society, etc.

The traditional mould which prepared young people for adult life, is weakened, broken or has not adapted to the changing world. Therefore, when growing out of childhood, young people do not always have efficient and effective support as they move towards adult roles.

Adults in all organizations face considerable difficulties in helping young people to meet their expectations. The ability to respond to the needs and expectations of young people is a key factor for the success of Scouting and its recognition as a reliable contributor to the development of society.

There are tried and tested ways of supporting adolescents and these include placing an emphasis on the peer group, giving young people access to responsibilities and involving them in decision-making. Another important aspect is developing positive relationships between young people and adults who are able to provide support, confidence, real challenges and opportunities to assist young people in trying out adult roles and acquiring skills recognised by society.

How you can discuss this topic:

Learn more about this topic, what challenges do young adolescents face in your community. How can they be supported? How can they have greater responsibilities and possibilities to be involved in the decision-making process? What opportunities are available in Scouting for adolescents and how can Scouting respond to their needs?

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Developing Awareness and Empathy
3. Taking action
4. Measuring the change

Resources and Links:

World Organizations of the Scout Movement Strategic Priority 2: Adolescents

Strategy link: <http://www.scout.org/strat/indexen.shtml>

Adolescents link: <http://www.scout.org/strat/sp2en.shtml>

Document: Adolescents Presentation - an overview of the situation regarding adolescents in Scout Associations (July 2002). Available from the above Strategy link.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supports Adolescents and Youth.

Link to UNFPA Adolescents website (English, French, Spanish and Arabic):

<http://unfpa.org/adolescents>