

Frank Tinsman
Developmental Psychology
April 28, 1993

Topsy Turvy Adolescence

Many people out there believe the stage we all go through called adolescence is filled with hardship. The assertion is that during this time, with all the physical and mental changes we encounter, we as people experience the most difficult times in our experience. Wrapping up my own adolescence, I would have to say—*maybe*. This is probably not true, however. As human beings we all have different experiences, different acquaintances, and different personalities. All of this humanness continually gives us the ups and downs throughout our existence. Adolescence's ups and downs are just unique to that particular time and situation—as are the experiences in each stage of our lives.

Perhaps what makes adolescence's downside seem so rough to some is the fact that so many new situations pop up. Suddenly being faced with many "adult" concerns— noticing physical attractions to others, rapid physical changes, new schools (from leaving elementary school behind to getting into college), defining who we are, possibly learning to drive, possibly joining a gang—all come up fairly quickly. Since all this is pretty new, the adolescent doesn't have much experience dealing with "acting adult" and thus encounters the stress of doing these well. Some folks, I imagine, were ill equipped to take on some of these new concerns and the consequential stress gave them quite a few bad memories of their teen years.

Maybe I'm more easygoing than most, but in my experience each concern I was faced with was generally full of pleasure, pain, and monotony all rolled up. Girls I dated sometimes were fun to be with and sometimes wrenched my heart into squishy pieces. Driving and getting a car was exhilarating and at the same time presented a nasty amount of personal responsibility to my face. Moving up through middle school and high school

offered much welcome experience noticing how I'd grown and at the same time provided pressures from every angle of my life. While these experiences were new and something I had to learn how to deal with, I know adolescence will not be the only part of my life—or anybody's life—where new challenges will appear. It would be foolish to think otherwise.

One of the things about my adolescence that helped me endure all the everything—and of course this doesn't just apply to my teen years—is my best friend. Of all the things I went through during my junior and senior high days, his friendship was what I was most a part of and what affected me the greatest. We partied together, we drove a thousand different places together, we tried to understand why parents are so weird; most importantly we supported each other. In times like when some girl connived to break our friendship, used him for sex, and then tossed him aside like he was a cigarette she'd finished smoking, I was there to help him through his genuine pain. That was pain he could have experienced at any time in life. The point is with someone to share the experience, it can help you grow.

That's really all life is—growing in some way or another. Encountering trials, tribulations, rejoicing and monotony are all part of being alive. How you assimilate or accommodate is up to you, but each experience is there for you to grow on. To say that adolescence's troubles as the worst or best for everybody's experience is to cheapen the rest of life as less harsh or less grand. Adolescence is a part of life, plain and simple. As humans it is our duty to ourselves to do what we think is best and recognize the growth from *every* part of our life. That way, we can take what we learned from our adolescence and anytime else and make the most of it.