

Grade 8 October Part 3

Independence is important but tricky to achieve

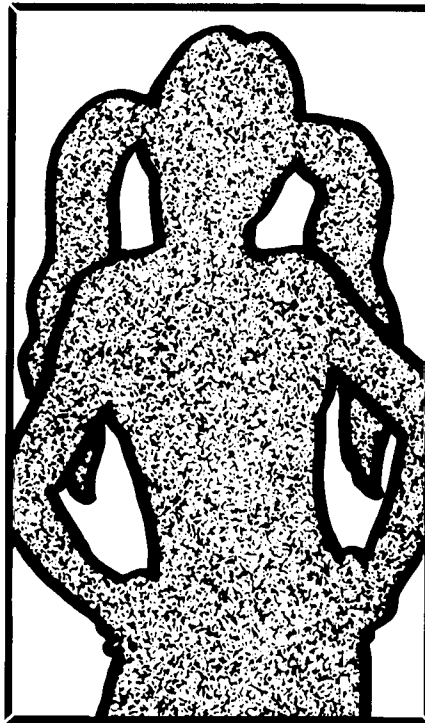
Independence is very important to young people. They feel the need to be in control, because in our society independence is equated with maturity, with growing up.

Difficult or not?

Most young people grow to independence without much difficulty. Of course, there are usually typical teenage flare-ups: Students go through their "you-can't-make-me-do-it" period. Thirteen-year-olds want to be alone. Instead of going with the family to visit grandmother, an eighth grader might insist on her right to stay home. Teens look for part-time jobs so that they can develop some financial freedom.

Some have a more difficult time. They become defiant. They refuse to follow rules and refuse to listen to reason.

Parents who notice this type of behavior should seek professional assistance. The school guidance counselor, the family doctor, or the minister can all help—not only personally, but also by suggesting other professional contacts.



Sociability is important

To be independent is not, however, to be unsociable. A teen can hold her own views but still acknowledge the right of others to hold their own views. Even though she "marches to her own drum" and does what she believes is right, she need not ignore the feelings and needs of other people.

Above all, she needs help developing a plan or purpose for her life. By listening, by focusing on the young person's feelings, by recognizing the growing need to feel in control, parents can help teens grow.

Making independence easier

For the most part, though, parents can make this transition to independence easier for their children.

How?

First, they can develop a home atmosphere that is supportive so that the young person sees the home as the safest place on earth.

Home can be a place where the young person is accepted as she is. It can be a place where she can make mistakes, where she can even do wrong but still not lose face. A teen needs to know that her family cares, that family members try to understand what she is going through and try to see her point of view.

"The more freedom a person has, the more important it is that he be responsible."

—Raymond Rubicam