

14 year old girl (from what looks to be a well balanced and wonderful family):

"My house is awful. You can't believe how bad it is here; I hate it and am so unhappy."

Parent of 15 year old girl:

"Samantha is so negative. She's like a walking little witch. I don't know what to do or how to talk to her anymore."

What is going on?

The teen years are a challenging time for girls and for parents. It's the teen's job to



individuate; they are supposed to be working on becoming their "own person," becoming different from their parents. It's a good thing but it's often painful and difficult. The process can take years to unfold. Parents often experience their teen as negative; they wonder what happened to the happy child they had just a few months earlier. An unhappy teen can cause much angst in a household.

What's a parent to do?

1. Establish strong bonds before the teen years.
2. Let go - as often as you can. If your teen isn't doing something illegal, immoral, or dangerous, consider letting it go. I'm not saying you shouldn't have boundaries and guidelines - you should, absolutely. It's just that there will be SO many issues. Choose your battles carefully.
3. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that the changes are NOT about you - the parent. They are about your teen. She is trying to grow up. It's a strange and difficult process.
4. Return to love; always return to love! Remind yourself of the wonderful person who lives behind that teenage frown or the negative attitude. She's still in there. Love her. She will show her face again - someday, I promise.