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## **Navigating Your Teen's Fluctuating Mood**

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# Navigating Your Teen's Fluctuating Mood



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RECENTLY, I OVERHEARD TWO PARENTS EXPRESSING FRUSTRATIONS WITH THEIR TEENAGERS' UNANNOUNCED MOOD SWINGS AND EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS.

Apparently, these parents couldn't fathom how their cheerful and even-tempered children had morphed into individuals whose moods and emotions seemed to have fluctuating volcanic impact on their relationships.

While there is genuine concern about children's mental-emotional well-being, it is important to note that these characteristics are not unique but are endemic to tweens and teens across the globe. Parenting at any stage comes with different challenges. But for many parents, the tween-teen years can be extremely difficult as they struggle to navigate through their child's webs of tangled emotions that often contribute to the relational instability between them.

Several factors contribute to unstable parent-child relationships during the tween-teen years. These factors are biological, psychological, social, and spiritual and are impacted by hormonal changes, socio-cultural and peer influences, identity search and formation, family dynamics, and stress. Gaps in children's early developmental years, where their needs for love, security, significance, understanding, purpose, and belonging were not adequately met, are also a factor. The tumultuous parent-child relationships during the teen years are also fraught with unaddressed intergenerational trauma transmitted genetically, verbally, and through modeling. In many cases, intergenerational trauma is not visible and is marked by psycho-neurological phenomena that affect the teenager's mental-emotional well-being. Biologically, over or under-production of certain hormones during childhood transition to early adulthood also contributes to teenagers' mood swings and seemingly irrational emotional outbursts.

Yet, despite factors contributing to teenagers' experiences that negatively affect the parent-child relationships, parents can take a proactive approach.

Parents are to be mindful of their responsibility to emulate God. God is keenly attuned to each person, demonstrating compassion and mercy (Psalm 116:1, 2) in every experience. Hence, the admonition to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" is a sacred reminder to parents to listen and respond with patience and compassion in difficult moments with their children. Parents emulate God by regulating their emotions, refusing to react, and instead encouraging open communication, inviting children to express feelings and frustrations verbally. It is important for parents to listen attentively to what is said, validate their child's feelings, and offer support. Sometimes parents' support is not readily accepted, but regardless, it must be readily given.

Additionally, parents can encourage teenagers to form and maintain healthy lifestyle habits that contribute to developmental balance (e.g., physical, mental, psychological, social, and spiritual) and well-being. Diet, rest, exercise, service, and connecting with God and others in the family and the community contribute to balance in their overall development and healthier parent-child relationships.

Finally, if mood swings and emotional outbursts persist and interfere with a child's daily functioning, it is important that parents seek godly, professional help. ■

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