

## Changes in the Emotional and Psychological State of Teenage Boys

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**Abstract.** This article examines key changes that occur during adolescence, including shifts in emotional regulation, identity formation, peer relationships, and mental health. Results indicate significant changes in emotional reactivity, self-esteem, and coping strategies. Moreover, the study highlights how peer influence and social networks impact the mental health of teenage boys, leading to an increased risk of anxiety and depression.

**Keywords:** Adolescence, teenage boys, emotional development, psychological state, puberty, identity formation, peer relationships, mental health, anxiety, depression, emotional resilience, gender roles, emotional intelligence, adolescence, loneliness, emotional sphere, social development situation.

### INTRODUCTION:

**Hormonal Changes and Emotional Shifts.** During puberty, boys experience significant hormonal fluctuations, primarily in the levels of testosterone. These hormonal shifts contribute to changes in mood, emotional regulation, and the expression of emotions. Testosterone influences aggression, sexual development, and feelings of self-esteem. These hormonal changes are closely linked to emotional outbursts, irritability, and heightened sensitivity to peer opinions. Research has shown that testosterone levels increase substantially during puberty, which may contribute to both positive traits (such as increased confidence) and more negative outcomes (like aggression or risk-taking behavior).

The teenage brain is still developing, particularly in areas associated with decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation. The prefrontal cortex, which helps regulate emotions and plan for the future, matures more slowly than the limbic system, which controls emotions. This developmental mismatch can lead to increased impulsivity and emotional intensity during adolescence. Studies using brain imaging techniques have revealed that the prefrontal cortex is not fully mature until the mid-20s. This cognitive development contributes to the emotional volatility seen in teenage boys, as their brains are still learning how to process and regulate emotions.

### METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this research is to examine the emotional and psychological changes in teenage boys, focusing on the factors that influence their mental well-being during adolescence. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Explore the emotional challenges faced by teenage boys, including stress, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues.
2. Analyze the psychological development of boys during adolescence and its impact on their behavior and decision-making.

3. Identify social, familial, and environmental factors that contribute to emotional and psychological changes in teenage boys.

## **RESULTS:**

Adolescence is a crucial stage of development between childhood and adulthood, considered fundamental for the development of personality. Synonyms for this age period used by scientists include the adjectives "transitional," "crucial," "difficult," and "critical." During the transition from one life phase to another, significant and complex processes occur. The emotional sphere of adolescents is particularly sensitive and differs in several aspects, including excitability, high sensitivity, anxiety, emotional resilience, and contradictory feelings. As a result of the body's restructuring and self-awareness across all areas of development, new qualities emerge:

A sense of adulthood and new ways of social interaction, a desire to communicate with peers;  
The formation of moral values and life perspectives;  
Self-awareness, recognition of one's abilities, interests, and capabilities;  
The development of personal meanings in life (general views on life, relationships between people, one's future);  
Conscious regulation of behavior, the ability to consider the feelings and interests of others, and the capacity to identify with them.

Through active participation in social life, adolescents gain personal experience, "make mistakes," and, as a result, new formations emerge. The central new formation in the adolescent's emotional sphere is the so-called "sense of adulthood." This is inherent to every adolescent and represents the subjective feeling of readiness to be a full and equal member of the older generation's community, the desire and ability to show "adulthood," and the wish to be seen as a respected individual by adults. How can this feeling be manifested? The key feature is the imitation of external signs of adulthood, social and intellectual maturity.

The general maturation of the body begins with puberty. The activation of sex hormones causes morphological changes—rapid growth (earlier in girls, but stronger in boys), changes in appearance, and the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. There is also an increase in sexual dimorphism between boys and girls due to the activation of sex hormones (testosterone in males and estrogen in females). O.A. Bantysheva believes that aggression depends on testosterone, while estrogen causes depression, so the degree of aggression and depression among adolescents varies significantly by gender. Girls are particularly prone to emotional disturbances, which is explained by their vulnerability, making them more likely to cry "out of nowhere" and experience constant mood changes.

Boys are more likely than girls to exhibit tendencies toward aggression, risk-taking, and violence (the "young male syndrome"). During evolution, men who took risks to gain power and status generally had more children than those who did not. The gender difference is reflected in the fact that young male criminals outnumber female criminals by ten times, and this is more typical of young men than older ones. Many violent crimes are triggered by disrespect, neglect of their status, or revenge for humiliation. Biologists argue against the one-sided view of psychologists that gender differences in behavior are formed by imitating adult behavior, reinforcing reflexes, and other forms of social learning.

Adolescents begin to understand the limits of their adulthood, particularly in terms of autonomy and responsibility. Their independence is more about growing self-confidence, the desire to take initiative, resist pressure, and take responsibility for their actions. Independence also manifests in the shifting of priorities—from obedience to parents to relationships with peers. As cognitive abilities develop, adolescents begin to notice the "weak points" and flaws of their parents, previously seen as impeccable, and view them critically.

L.S. Vygotsky suggests that adolescence divides into two phases—negative and positive. The

negative phase is linked to the fading and decline of previously established systems of interests, while the positive phase is associated with the maturing of a new core of interests.

What is characteristic of the emotional life of adolescents? When discussing negative emotions, adolescents experience these more at the beginning of this period, but they weaken over time. It is worth noting that girls tend to experience negative emotions for a longer period.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Social Influence and Peer Relationships**

During adolescence, peer relationships become central to the emotional and psychological well-being of teenage boys. Peer acceptance and group identity are highly important, and social interactions can significantly impact their mood and self-esteem. Adolescents are more likely to experience heightened emotional responses due to peer pressure, group dynamics, and the desire for acceptance.

**Scientific Findings:** Research indicates that peer influence plays a strong role in shaping emotional and behavioral responses during adolescence. Studies have shown that teenagers are more likely to take risks and exhibit certain emotional responses (e.g., anxiety or excitement) when they are around their peers.

During puberty, teenage boys undergo hormonal fluctuations that impact mood regulation and emotional responses. These hormonal shifts can result in increased irritability, mood swings, and heightened sensitivity to stress. The adolescent brain is also developing, particularly areas involved in emotional processing and decision-making, contributing to the intensity and volatility of emotions during this stage.

**Mental Health Concerns.** Teenage boys are at risk for various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders. While emotional distress may often be underreported or misinterpreted, boys may exhibit different symptoms compared to girls. For example, depression in teenage boys may manifest more in externalized behaviors such as irritability, aggression, or substance use, rather than internalized symptoms like sadness.

**Scientific Findings:** Research has shown that while rates of depression may be higher among adolescent girls, teenage boys are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors. Longitudinal studies have indicated that emotional and psychological issues in adolescence, if left unaddressed, can lead to mental health challenges in adulthood. Teenage boys are more prone to risk-taking behavior, which is linked to changes in brain structure and function. This includes engaging in risky activities such as reckless driving, substance use, or experimentation with sexual activity. This inclination towards risk can be partly explained by the heightened sensitivity to rewards and the underdevelopment of the brain areas responsible for assessing risks and consequences.

Studies have found that the brain's reward system is particularly active during adolescence, especially in boys. This makes them more motivated to seek out novel and exciting experiences, even if those experiences may be dangerous.

Teenage boys undergo changes in body image as they experience physical growth spurts, muscle development, and other changes. These changes can contribute to feelings of pride, insecurity, or confusion, depending on how they perceive their bodies in relation to their peers. Media and societal standards of masculinity also impact boys' body image and self-esteem.

**Scientific Findings:** Research on body image has revealed that while boys may not experience the same level of body dissatisfaction as girls, they are still vulnerable to societal pressures regarding masculinity and physical appearance. Body image concerns can negatively affect emotional well-being and self-esteem.

As teenage boys assert their independence, they may experience conflict with authority figures, particularly parents. The desire for autonomy and self-expression can lead to tension at home, and boys may withdraw emotionally or engage in rebellious behavior. However, a supportive and understanding family environment can help foster emotional growth and provide a buffer against mental health challenges. Studies on parent-child relationships during adolescence highlight the

importance of a balanced approach. Adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and warm are less likely to experience emotional difficulties or engage in problematic behaviors.

## Conclusion

The emotional and psychological changes that teenage boys experience during adolescence are complex and multifaceted. These changes are influenced by a combination of hormonal shifts, cognitive development, social pressures, and environmental factors. While these years are often marked by turbulence, they also provide critical opportunities for growth, self-discovery, and emotional maturation. Understanding the underlying science behind these changes can help parents, educators, and mental health professionals provide better support for teenage boys during this transformative period of their lives.

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