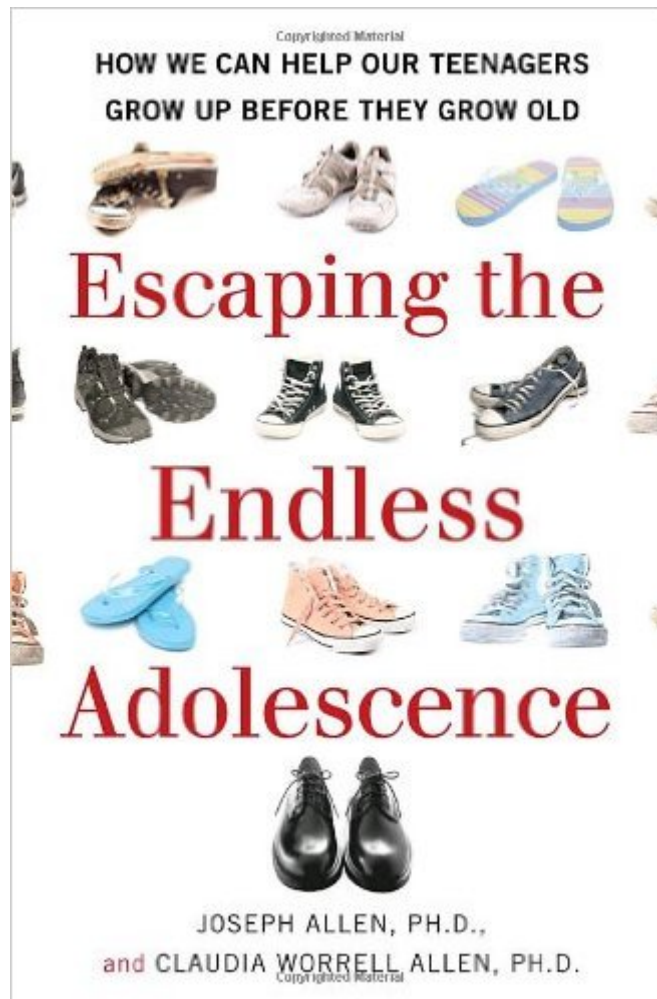


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# Escaping The Endless Adolescence: How We Can Help Our Teenagers Grow Up Before They Grow Old



## Synopsis

Do you sometimes wonder how your teen is ever going to survive on his or her own as an adult? Does your high school junior seem oblivious to the challenges that lie ahead? Does your academically successful nineteen-year-old still expect you to “just take care of” even the most basic life tasks? Welcome to the stunted world of the Endless Adolescence. Recent studies show that today’s teenagers are more anxious and stressed and less independent and motivated to grow up than ever before. Twenty-five is rapidly becoming the new fifteen for a generation suffering from a debilitating “failure to launch.” Now two preeminent clinical psychologists tell us why and chart a groundbreaking escape route for teens and parents. Drawing on their extensive research and practice, Joseph Allen and Claudia Worrell Allen show that most teen problems are not hardwired into teens’ brains and hormones but grow instead out of a “Nurture Paradox” in which our efforts to support our teens by shielding them from the growth-spurring rigors and rewards of the adult world have backfired badly. With compelling examples and practical and profound suggestions, the authors outline a novel approach for producing dramatic leaps forward in teen maturity, including:

- Turn Consumers into Contributors Help teens experience adult maturity “its bumps and its joys” through the right kind of employment or volunteer activity.
- Feed Them with Feedback Let teens see and hear how the larger world perceives them. Shielding them from criticism “constructive or otherwise” will only leave them unequipped to deal with it when they get to the “real world.”
- Provide Adult Connections Even though they’ll deny it, teens desperately need to interact with adults (including parents) on a more mature level “and such interaction will help them blossom!”
- Stretch the Teen Envelope Do fewer things for teens that they can do for themselves, and give them tasks just beyond their current level of competence and comfort. Today’s teens are starved for the lost fundamentals they need to really grow: adult connections and the adult rewards of autonomy, competence, and mastery. Restoring these will help them unlearn their adolescent helplessness and grow into adults who can make you “and themselves” proud.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is wonderful. The authors have done an excellent job of taking a subject that is inordinately complicated--the nature of adolescence, and its relation to adulthood--and rendered it understandable. The book has several strands that combine to produce incredibly helpful insights. There are stories of real adolescents, as they struggle with that place in-between childhood and young adulthood, wanting to move toward the latter without really wanting (or knowing how) to move from the former. There are concepts drawn from adolescent, clinical and developmental psychology that help the reader make sense of the stories. There is practical advice about how to act in relation to our own adolescents--that is, how to change our own behaviors in ways that are most useful to our own kids as they navigate toward adulthood. These aspects, together, provide the most useful and compelling book on the subject that I have read. And the book is inordinately readable--the writing is accessible, the stories are moving, and the writers' tone is inviting and thoughtful. I have never before given such a positive review, but this book is worth it.

I found in this book a wonderful clarity about the job responsibility of a parent during the adolescent years. Rather than reacting to the day to day challenges and frustrations of parenting teenagers as is an easy pattern to slip into, it presents a tremendous view into how to get ahead of the game and see our job as creating an environment for their growth into adulthood. It was insightful at very many levels--from reframing common teenage behaviors as a way of understanding what teens really want, to very constructive and tangible ideas on how to channel those needs/desires. Some of the suggestions seem very obvious (e.g. checking yourself when you find yourself doing something FOR them, and seeing it as an opportunity to teach them independence, and finding opportunities for meaningful interaction with other adults), but when placed in the larger context of how to support our children in moving through adolescence to adulthood, they gain a greater imperative. I appreciated the tone of the book as well. I found it hopeful and supportive, without a trace of condescension or chastisement. Stories of teenage struggles were told with humility and

compassion. The authors allowed me to see my parenting mistakes without feeling beaten up! After reading this book, I can think back to many conversations with my children (ages 16 and 13) where they were trying to tell me exactly what this book is saying. Now I get it! Thanks!

The Allens have done a service to researchers, parents, educators, and mental health practitioners with this book. The main theme of the book is that the period of adolescence, itself an artifact of modern times, has grown into a prolonged period of helplessness, indecision, and anxiety. They argue that this has occurred largely because American society, through its institutions (schools) and communities, largely fails to provide adolescents with pathways to engage meaningfully in the adult world, a critical requirement for positive development. Ironically, adolescents desperately want to be seen as adults. However, we isolate them from the adult world and its responsibilities, mutual dependence, and possibilities of making a difference to others. The result, according to the Allens and their research, is that adolescents don't grow up, or they engage in risky adult-like behaviors absent healthy alternatives. All this being said, they explore programs, activities, and institutions where adolescents can meaningfully engage with adults in adult activities. This is the necessary fix to solve the problem of the endless adolescence. The Allens have provided a template for educators, parents, practitioners, and researchers to begin repairing the damages we have collectively done. Do not hesitate to purchase this book.

This book is important. It lays out a strong case for how we are screwing up our future, and explains the sort of steps we need to take to fix things. If you have teenagers, if you have kids who may some day be teenagers, if you work with teenagers, or if you vote, read this book. I already knew that our society shortchanges teenagers and treats them too much like little kids. I already knew teenagers are capable of far more responsibility than our society gives them credit for. I already knew common sense said we should do things differently. This book confirmed all that. But it did more. It made me realize the situation was worse than I thought, but also easier to solve than I'd imagined. Several things in it clarified some of my own thinking, and warned me away from a couple of errors I've been making. For instance. Teenagers need responsibility. It's critical for their growth and maturity, but also for their mental and emotional health. I already knew that. But this book explains how the typical teenage jobs these days - fast food and the like - are not adequate. They don't actually help, and may in fact hurt because they often end up not really demanding much responsibility, creating yet another environment of hypersocialization by peers, and give the kid a false sense of wealth. Hypersocialization by peers? That's another subject the authors cover. They

point out that while we joke or complain about "Lord of the Flies" type behavior from youths, we are unthinkingly trapping our kids in that exact sort of environment. One where they are cut off from real adult interaction and left to be socialized - civilized - by each other. If you think we should raise civilized, happy, healthy, and perhaps even productive children, read this book and take it's message to heart.

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