

## **Introduction:**

( From a booklet by Judith Baenen )

Get Ready for Changes;

Although they sometimes don't show it by words or actions, young adolescents are devoted to their families and very much affected by them. Family provides an opportunity to be oneself, to grow and change in a safe environment to show and receive love. The family in turn should be prepared to provide the support needed by a child undergoing some of the most dramatic changes in a lifetime.

Educators involved with preadolescent students recognize the need for healthy family relationships as well as for family involvement in the intermediate school setting. Too often parents avoid contact with the intermediate school for fear of inappropriately interfering or simply because they do not know how to approach young adolescents. Nonetheless, studies have shown over and over that when parents increase involvement in schools at the intermediate level, students actually achieve more, like school more, and have better internal family relationships.

The parents of preadolescents are anxious. Their children, who up until recently had been charming, intelligent, capable, and loving, have suddenly become belligerent, forgetful, irresponsible, and sulky. But at least these parents are talking to each other about these changes in their children. In doing this, they see that their children are not the only ones acting differently.

Nearly all intermediate school kids go through a wide variety of changes during their preadolescent years. Their bodies change, their attitudes and values change, their relationships change, even their intellectual processes change during these years. And all of this change comes just when parents were getting used to pleasant, articulate nine or ten-year-olds. Now they are dealing with an eleven, twelve, or thirteen-year-old who is as different from the earlier version as Bambi is from a grizzly bear.

There are many reasons for these changes which all preadolescents experience to one degree or another. Hormones, brain growth, social development: all of these play a part in making preadolescents different

from their younger versions. There are plenty of textbooks that explain the why's of change among preadolescents. Some will offer charts to show the ratio of growth to social maturation. But what most parents need is a chart that will show the ratio of preadolescent behavior to the growth of parental gray hair. Parents want to know how to enjoy living with a preadolescent - and it can be done.

First of all , get ready for changes!

Many parents, lulled by the generally pleasant behavior of their Year 6 child, begin to believe that this quiet period will last. They may assume that adolescence, with its rebellion and "generation gap", is far away. And they are right: adolescence is far away. But in between the pleasure of childhood and the pain of adolescence comes "preadolescence," a roller coaster transition period.

"I don't understand what's happening to Maria.

Just a few weeks ago, she was a thoughtful, helpful little girl, and now she's indifferent and argumentative.

The slightest little thing and she's crying. I'm worried about her."

"Kevin's changed, too.

You know how last summer he made all that money mowing lawns?

He was a regular businessman! He was so organized and responsible.

Now his teachers tell me he constantly forgets his homework, he loses things.

And when I asked him if he was going to shovel walks this winter he said shoveling walks was 'stoo-pid'.

It seems nearly everything is 'stupid'.

How could he have changed so fast!"