

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONDITIONS THAT IMPEDE OR INTERRUPT DEVELOPMENT (ROADBLOCKS TO DEVELOPMENT)

Under normal circumstances, most teens develop into responsible adults. There are certain conditions that can get in the way of their development. Just as physical growth can be interrupted or impaired by disease or lack of nutrients, developmental tasks can be interrupted or impaired by other events.

Most teens get through these developmental tasks pretty much on schedule and become mature adults. There are, however, events that may happen in the life of the teen that can delay or interrupt the developmental process. Whenever this interruption occurs as a result of any factor(s), all energies are focused on the interruption and not on the developmental task. This slows or stops normal maturation.

If a teen must cope with a traumatic event such as the death of a family member or close friend, all of his/her energies are used trying to understand and deal with that loss. The recovery may take quite a long time. In the meantime, normal developmental skills stay at or near the same pretrauma levels.

For example: A teen who becomes involved in drug use is often completely dedicated to securing and using drugs, and the tasks of preparing for a career and learning social or communication skills receive no attention. Thus, these tasks remain under developed.

Common roadblocks to development are:

- A. Crisis level traumas such as:
 - 1. Death of a parent
 - 2. Parents getting a divorce
 - 3. Death of a sibling, close family member, or friend
 - 4. Severe illness such as polio, cancer, paralysis, AIDS, etc.
- B. Living with abuse, including:
 - 1. Physical
 - 2. Emotional/verbal
 - 3. Sexual
- C. Teen pregnancy
- D. Drug and/or alcohol dependency
- E. Compulsive or obsessive behaviors
 - 1. Grades
 - 2. Excelling in sports
 - 3. Physical appearance

After the trauma that interrupts the developmental process has passed, development will resume where it left off. For example, in the death of a parent or someone close, the initial shock and grief will consume all the energy, thoughts and actions of the teen. When the initial grief begins to lessen and life begins to move forward, then the teen can return to normal activities that allow for normal development such as going back to school, seeing friends socially, etc.