

ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

Adjustment problems arise out of the typical adolescence stage and process of development. The dynamics in social groups change rapidly — family, school, and associations with same sex and with the opposite sex.

It's impossible to predict who will develop adjustment problems or disorders, even if the precipitating event is the same, but it's important to note that the development of an adjustment problem may be brought on by both internal and external factors.

Adjustment problems can also be caused by a major life stressor that is beyond the control of an adolescent or parents, such as death of a loved one (especially if it was a sudden death), major life changes, major traumas, or a major medical diagnoses.

Symptoms of adjustment problems, which vary wildly between people, can include:

- Agitation and restlessness
- Anxiety
- Fears
- Worry
- Tension
- Trembling or twitching of the extremities
- Physical complaints without medical cause
- Heart palpitations
- Depressed mood
- Social withdrawal and decreased social functioning
- Occupational impairment
- Various conduct disorders – stealing, fighting & vandalism.

Impact of Divorce

Many studies have reported that children of divorced parents experience more problems in adjustment than children who grow up in intact families. Much of the research suggests that children of divorce are more likely to have more difficulties in school and to be more sexually active, more aggressive, more anxious, more withdrawn/ less social, more depressed, and more likely to abuse substances and participate in delinquent acts than their peers who parents are still together.

Some researchers have suggested that the economic hardship custodial parents face following divorce is a critical factor in predicting children's post-divorce adjustment. Financial strain is one of the strongest predictors of depression in single parents. Higher levels of depression are predictive of more punitive disciplinary practices and decreased parental nurturance, support, and satisfaction with the parenting role.

Dealing with Adolescents with Adjustment Issues

Some tips for coping with adolescent adjustments issues are

- teaching a strong-willed adolescent to be more collaborative with you by being more collaborative with them
- teaching a manipulative adolescent to be more straightforward and direct with you by being less oppressive with them
- teaching a submissive adolescent to speak up and stand up for himself with you by becoming a parent with whom it feels safe and comfortable and reasonable to disagree.

Also influential are effective parental monitoring, joint decision-making between the adolescent and parent regarding household rules and youth activities, and low parent-child conflict. Activities that reflect effective parenting include providing warmth and support, assisting with problems, providing encouragement, setting and explaining standards, monitoring, and enforcing discipline.

In general, adolescents with significant school problems should undergo educational testing and a mental health evaluation as early as possible. Specific problems can be treated as needed, and general support and encouragement provided.

HOW PACIFIC QUEST WILDERNESS THERAPY CAN HELP ADOLESCENTS WITH ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

When more immediate action is necessary, wilderness treatment programs like Pacific Quest combine a wilderness experience with other highly effective forms of therapy and treatment. Pacific Quest's unique Sustainable Growth Wilderness Therapy Model is the most comprehensive approach to school issues and related adolescent adjustment problems. This model incorporates many treatment options to help adolescents achieve lasting change in terms of both behavior and overall physical and emotional well-being. Multi-sensory treatments are critical in maximizing growth, balance, and learning potential, which is why Pacific Quest's whole-person, nature-based model is effective. Pacific Quest actually harnesses the power of nature and practices complete wellness with qualified staff working together on every aspect. Pacific Quest works because it is an individualized, comprehensive and neuro-developmentally informed approach.

At Pacific Quest we can design strategies that reach our students and move them through a deep and lasting change process. Students receive several hours of individual and group therapy per week with one of our therapists. Individual therapy focuses on personal struggles, and dynamics both at home and at Pacific Quest, as well as strategies and coping skills for sustainable change and growth. Group therapy focuses on group and family dynamics, peer relationships, as well as shared struggles and experiences. Groups may focus on a particular challenge or issue such as adoption, drug or alcohol use, computer addiction, divorce, and more.