

Twelve sentences define this generation:

1. Loneliness is their heart condition. If there is one word other than lost to describe today's youth, it would be the word lonely. They are desperately lonely people.
2. Relationships matter most to them. Relationships have become number one because deprivation *creates* value. Whatever you are deprived of is what you tend to value. Kids of recent generations have been deprived of relationships. They have been deprived of closeness and love, belonging and relationships and because of this they will do anything for closeness.
3. Music is their language. Music expresses what is in our souls. What is in the soul of a younger generation that carries a suitcase full of pain? Is it anger, hurt, and pent-up frustration? The "dysfunctional music" expresses the dysfunction in their souls. That screaming singer is screaming their scream. George Barna, in his study *Third Millennium Teens* says, "Researchers have discovered that music is one of the most important influences in the lives of young people. For millions of young people music produces a life philosophy; cultural icons; heroes; and role models; support for values and lifestyles; a common language and the opportunity to develop community related to a shared sense of common sound, ideas, or artists."
4. Self Worth is their struggle. Many of the problems of young people are actually only symptoms. The problem is often self-worth, surfacing in behaviours such as alcohol abuse, sexual involvement, violence and occult activity. The impact of teenagers' self – image on their behaviour cannot be underestimated.
5. Anaesthetic is more important than cure. Young people today are not as interested in solutions to their problems as they are in getting the pain to stop.
6. They know no boundaries. Because authority has been lost, today's young people play in a field where there are no boundaries. Since there is no right or wrong, they have no sense of sin. As we work to understand the young people around us, we need to remember they are products of a culture that knows no boundaries. We cannot assume anything about their understanding of Christian morality.
7. They want authority. Young people are looking for authority – but it is authority that is earned, not demanded. You can earn authority by listening to them, loving them, spending time with them. And they are looking for someone who is worthy of trust. Positional authority – authority demanded from the position you hold – does not mean much to young people today. But personal authority – the kind that comes from the kind of person you are – is exactly what their questioning hearts are looking for.
8. Their now matters more than the future. "The future is too far off, and it may never come."
9. The world does not interest them.
10. Commitment is too risky. The struggle with commitment affects everything from holiness and homework. Young people are reluctant to make long-term commitments to anything.
11. Sex is Expected ... but Confusing. Far too many young people are having sex by the end of high school. The tragedy is not only that so many teenagers have sex, but that it is expected they will. And it is happening at younger and younger ages. Media images don't help: Commercials exploit sex; T.V shows assume that dating includes sex. The pressure to be sexually active is intense.
12. These Teenagers are post-Christian. We find ourselves in the middle of the most unreached generation in history. Because they are a blank slate spiritually, today's young people are easily deceived by the devils lies. They are really vulnerable.

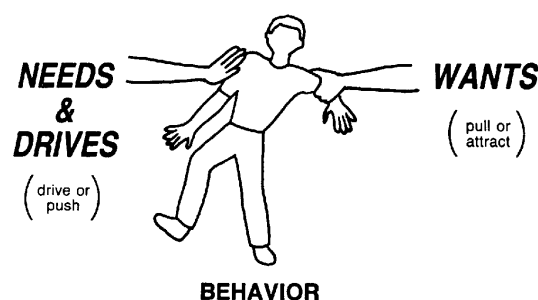
The Behaviour of Adolescents

According to Dr. Keith Olson, in *Why Teenagers Act the Way They Do* (chapter 3), adolescent behaviour is affected by drives, needs, wants, limits, pressures and defence mechanisms.

(1) Drives are inherited requirements for maintaining life itself, such as the biological requirements for food, water, air, sexual release and stimulation. When these drives are not met the person becomes tense, irrational and finally dies. These are often referred to as *primary drives*.

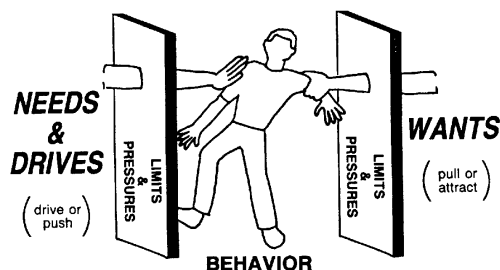
(2) Needs include a wide variety of psychological, social and spiritual requirements necessary for a fulfilling and rewarding life. Examples of needs, also called *secondary drives*, include self-esteem, belonging and relationship with God.

(3) Wants 'pull' behaviour, whereas drives and needs 'drive' behaviour. They are not vital to the person's existence nor to their fulfilment in life. Teenagers are *driven* by hunger but they may *want* a cheeseburger; they *need* interpersonal relationships but may *want* relationships with a specific peer. When wants are not fulfilled teenagers often acts as if their drives or needs have not been satisfied, becoming depressed, anxious or intense about getting what they want. The diagram below shows the effect of drives, needs and wants on a teenager's behaviour:

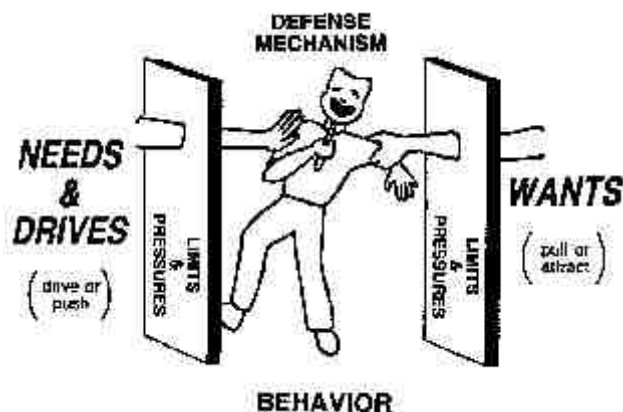


(4) Limits are faced by teenagers as they push away from their parents to see themselves as separate personalities. In their search and experimentation with new behaviours, interests and activities, youth encounter limitations established and enforced by their parents, school personnel, police or other authorities. The most challenging limits are personal, i.e. strengths, attractiveness, intelligence and skills.

(5) Pressures that come from the environment and within the individual are encountered, including the pressure to conform and to achieve. The diagram below shows how limits and pressures *block* teenagers drives, needs and wants - often leading to emotional reactions such as frustration, anger and anxiety.



(6) Defence Mechanisms are learned when anxieties and frustrations arise as a teenager's drives, needs and wants are blocked by limits and pressures. In order to cope, the person develops a style of defence to hide selected details of the self, to protect from feeling exposed and self-conscious, to protect from internal conflict and feelings of anxiety and guilt. They are often based on elements of truth but involve omitted or exaggerated truths. Common defences are: fantasy, projection, rationalisation, regression, repression and withdrawal. The diagram below shows the relationship:



Needs of Today's Youth

1. Education and Economic Needs

All young people need access to education and training opportunities that develop their skills and knowledge and increase their employability

2. Social Needs

All human beings have a need to belong. Young people are at a stage where they are developing a sense of being part of a group and negotiating systems and relationships. To be able to do this successfully they need support and nurturing by family and the community

3. Health Needs

In order to develop positively young people need to maintain physical and sexual health and have access to health facilities and resources such as clinics and hospitals.

4. Emotional and Psychological Needs

All young people need to have a positive sense of self and the ability to face and manage the challenges of life

5. Recreational Needs

Young people need to have access to recreational entertainment resources. These opportunities all young people to express themselves positively and creatively.

6. Spiritual Needs

Young people are in need of a Savior. They need to have a sense of purpose and belonging in a world that makes sense.

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