



# Rifka Schonfeld **STRATEGIES**

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

## TEENS & MOOD SWINGS: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Dear Readers,

This week's newsletter includes a question on the topic of teens and mood swings. Read ahead and understand the underlying causes.

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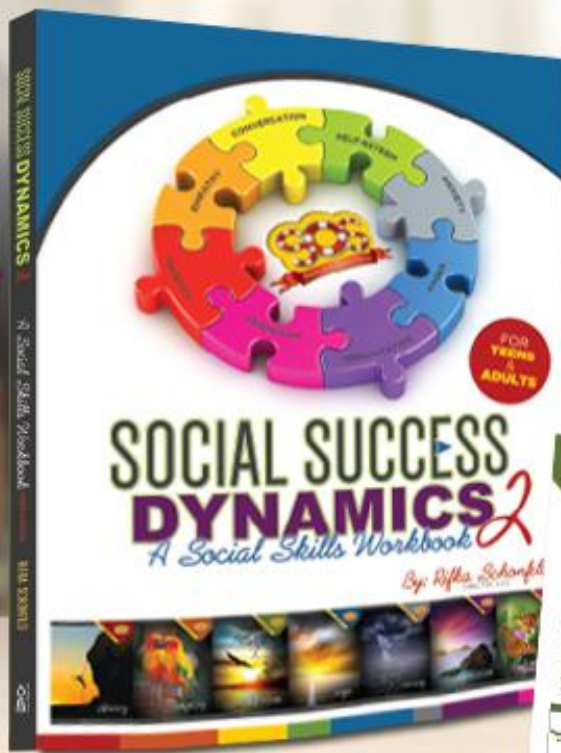
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## QUESTION:

My teenager seems to quickly switch from one mood to another. She might be very happy and relaxed at the dinner table and then suddenly for no apparent reason, she gets frustrated and angry. I know mood swings are normal for this age, but I wanted to know how much anger is too much?



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**ANSWER:**

Teenagers are notorious for their mood swings and out of control emotions, including anger. Let's look at the origin of these emotions. First, adolescents are going through a lot of physical changes. Second, for years, they have lived happily in the cocoon of their family and now suddenly they are gaining freedom and options outside of the home.

These two issues, physical changes and new independence, create a lot of confusion and angst in adolescents. They experience a real push and pull – if they grow as an individual, does that mean they are not going to fit into their family structure anymore? These conflicting emotions trigger painful emotions and often lead to adolescent anger.

At its heart, this anger is positive. It means that the teenager is growing into his or her own person and developing an identity that is separate from his or her parents. The *American Counseling Association* explains that it is how this anger is controlled or expressed that makes all the difference, “the problem is not anger, but that individuals frequently do not know how to manage anger.”

When you are angry, the natural reaction is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural response to threats and it allows us to fight and defend ourselves when we feel attacked. Therefore, a certain amount of anger is necessary for our survival. Alternatively, we cannot simply act out each time something irritates or annoys us.

The *American Psychological Association* explains that people use a variety of conscious and unconscious approaches to deal with angry feelings. Two of the main ways that people handle anger are expressing and suppressing. Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive (but not aggressive) manner is the healthiest way to approach anger. Being assertive means being respectful of others while still making sure that your own needs are met.

Unexpressed anger can lead to other problems, such as feeling perpetually hostile and



cynical. If people are not able to constructively express their anger, they might end up putting others down, criticizing everything, and making pessimistic comments. Not surprisingly, people do not express their anger are not likely to have many successful relationships.

Anger is not an inherently bad emotion. Rather, it is how we deal with anger that makes all the difference.



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