

“Every conversation starts with the child”

Adolescence



Well I think it's fair to say it's quite a whilst since I was a teenager but it's not hard to remember to feelings of 'omnipotence' 'invincibility' 'injustice' and at times sheer terror!!!!

“I'm too young to be old and too old to be young.”
— **Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe***

By the way I still feel a bit like that!! This week's blog is coming out to you in advance of our practice week next week which focuses on working with adolescents and includes loads of workshops delivered by our colleagues in CSC but also by colleagues in other agencies – [see MYLO](#). I would like to say thank you to Rachel (Lovelady) who has written the blog and to the AP team and Sophia Lenton Brook who have organised a fabulous agenda for next week. Rachel.....

I started my social work training at the age of 18. In my first few months of university, our cohort was divided in to groups and set a stage of development to present on to our peers. One group presented on 'pre-birth', one on 'under 5s' etc. My group, of four, were given “adolescence”. As is often the case with group work, three of us worked industriously to put together a Power Point with theory, research, case examples and interactive sections. One member of the group didn't show up to any planning and, of course, arrived on the day with some scribbled notes which she would “throw in once we are up on the stage!”

I felt entirely uncomfortable with the task; I didn't feel I had much to contribute and I focused on reading theory in books and throwing in facts from research I had read.

On the day, we had 15 minutes to present, the lecturer (mistakenly) tapped her watch after 10 minutes saying we were out of time. We rushed the last section, tumbling over our words and looking at each other in a panicked state! We all got the worst grade of our university careers and spent a lot of time grumbling in the Student's Union afterwards.

On reflection, I can see why I felt so uncomfortable about this task. Many models of development would have still seen me as a teenager – at 18 years old – and others would have seen me as “emerging” from my teenage years!

‘The Difficult Age’

In my newly qualified year, I was invited to The Festival of Social Work run by Children's Social Work Matters. Dez Holmes (Director of Research in Practice) spoke at the event on the topic of “Adolescence; The Difficult Age”.

She primarily asked us to reflect on how the general public on a bus react to two scenarios;



- A baby crying in their pram at the front of the bus
- A teenager swearing and shouting at friends sat on the back seat of the bus

She asked us about whether there was any way of knowing, as a member of the public, which child were more distressed?

She queried whether there was any way of knowing, as a fellow passenger on the bus, why each child was distressed and what they were trying to communicate?

Being ‘Crazy’ about the Kid

“To develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about the kid. That's number one. First, last, and always.”
(Bronfenbrenner, 1971)

I love this quote and the concept. Is it easier to be 'crazy about the kid' when they are small? Are there things teenagers do which make it harder to feel 'crazy' about them?

We were all Teenagers once!



In preparing for Adolescence Week, I have asked some familiar names to tell me about their

experience of being a teenager! Some chose to keep their responses anonymous – others said I could attribute their names to their revelations! ☺



Is there anything you wish your 11 year old self had known?

Whilst it can feel really important to fit in as a teenager, it's not like that forever. Be confident in being your own person and in what makes you different

Martha Price

How would you describe teenage you? **I was immature and at times I didn't recognise the risky situations I was putting myself in. There were other times where I thought I had understood the risk but hadn't fully thought through the consequences.**

How would your friends have described teenage you at the time?

Fun and always smiling (I was good at hiding my problems)

Anonymous

Favourite music when I was a teenager was new romantic – especially Duran Duran and then I became a Goth and got into the Cure. I had hair of many colours as a teenager and this got me into trouble in my very strict girl's school! (Amanda Hatton).

What is the riskiest thing you did as a teenager?

Let's say run through a field of wheat

Niall McVicar

How did you keep in touch with friends as a teenager? **There was a telephone box in the village I lived in; if I couldn't call my friends from home I used to have to walk to the village which was half a mile away and call from there. I used 10 pence pieces that I collected through the week.** (Sophie Wales)

What is the riskiest thing you did as a teenager?
Emotional risk mostly – wanting to be popular. I did travel to London more than once with no idea where I was sleeping did not feel risky at the time (Suzie Grove)

How would you describe teenage you? **I used to write a lot, long diaries, letters to lots of people (even politicians complaining about things) – I used to campaign against things the local council did, like closing the swimming baths and reducing bus routes – I suppose today the equivalent would be on line or attending protests** (Sophie Wales)

Do you have any other reflections on being a teenager?
My teenage years lasted until I was 22 or so. (Suzie Grove)

Is there anything you know now which you wish you had known at 11 years old?
That I am intelligent and capable – that success is multi-dimensional not just about school and exams. (Suzie Grove)

How would you describe your teenage years? **Sometime confusing, sometimes exciting and quite often pressured – school, home, friends etc.** (Sophie Keeble)

What one activity did you do more than any other as a teenager? **Smoke roll-ups, dish out sarcastic chat**
Dez Holmes (Key Note Speaker, Director of Research in Practice)

What is the riskiest thing you did as a teenager? **Hitch-hiked from mid-Wales to Reading festival and back, three years in a row**
Dez Holmes (Key Note Speaker, Director of Research in Practice)

Is there anything you know now which you wish you had known at 11 years old? **That Sinn Fein isn't a person and my Mum probably does know best.**

Anonymous

What words would you use to describe yourself as a teenager?

Mentimeter



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Here are the questions I asked. I made it very clear that no one was obliged to answer any or all of them and, that answers could be shared anonymously. A number of colleagues shared that this reflection was cathartic for them. Others said it was hard and really got them thinking about their own teenage years and also about raising teenagers themselves. Could you use these to reflect in team meeting next week?

What was your favourite song/ artist/ band when you were a teenager?

How did you keep in touch with friends as a teenager?

What one activity did you do more than any other as a teenager?

How would you describe your teenage years?

What is the riskiest thing you did as a teenager?

Were there any risks you took as a teenager which were celebrated by others? Who celebrated it? Why?

Were there risks you took as a teenager which people frowned up or were worried about?

Why were they worried? Do you think they were right to be worried?

How would you describe teenage you?

How would your friends have described teenage you?

How would your family, your carers or any close relatives have described teenage you?

If you could give one message to teenage you, what would you tell them?

Is there anything you know now which you wish you had known at 11 years old?

Do you have any other reflections on being a teenager?

Please, where you can, take advantage of the many opportunities available next week through Adolescence Week. You can book on to courses at:

<https://york.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=2489>

I recently received the link to the below video from the National County Lines Coordination Centre and am sharing it with you as I think it is really good. It shows the different routes into child exploitation through the eyes of a number of children.

It also shows cuckooing and the movement of children for the purposes of criminal and sexual exploitation.

You will need to copy and paste the link into your browser; <https://www.humberside-pcc.gov.uk/News/News-Archive/2020/New-film-aims-to-raise-awareness-of-young-people-who-go-missing.aspx>

Finally, don't forget it's your last chance to register with SWE - "Calling all Social Workers - Have you re-registered with Social Work England yet? Don't forget the deadline is looming at the end of the month and anyone who hasn't re-registered and uploaded at least one piece of CPD won't be able to work. I know life is busy but it doesn't take long to do. Lesley Furnival is happy to offer advice and support regarding completing the CPD element if needed, just drop her an email this week."

Please remember to share your thoughts on this blog and any other with me, your feedback is vital, is this blog useful? What are your thoughts/tips on recording?

Dallas

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