

# Conscious Creative Courageous LIVING WITH CHILDREN

## Profiles of Development

### Fourteen Years

*Background: The Gesell Institute of Child Development has observed that children and teenagers go through a repeating sequence of six different stages with predictable changes in mood and behaviour in each. Fourteen Years includes just one such stage. The behaviour observed in these stages reflects the qualities associated in tradition with the planets—in the case of Fourteen with Jupiter.*

*The developmental traits in these profiles represent only one aspect of children's behaviour and may be masked, modified or intensified by other factors, both individual and environmental, such as temperament, gender related behaviours, high stress levels, over-stimulation, too much screen time or organic problems.*

*Note: If your teenager has turned this age but shows none of these behaviours, please read the previous age level, or just wait a few months, then read this again!*

*These profiles integrate the wonderful descriptions from the Gesell Institute of Child Development research and the ideas of Rudolf Steiner into my own research. Direct quotations from Gesell are in 'single quote marks' or indented.*

## Fourteen

### A stage for an experience of Jupiter qualities

Fourteen, like Eight and Four, shows an interesting manifestation of Jupiter qualities. Where the younger years showed Jupiter's bigness, openheartedness and expansiveness in personality, in Fourteen, with new capacities for thinking, we also begin to see some more

mature Jupiter qualities—more wisdom and an expansive overview, more seeking of truth and high ideals, and a social conscience. They also have the versatility, self-reliance, and strong will of Jupiter.

### Physical growth

At Fourteen the emphasis in physical growth is now moving back into the head and nerve sense system. The maturation of two complete cycles of seven years has been completed and has brought a certain health and harmony with it. Given a good environment and sensitive responses from adults, Fourteen is alive,

abounding in energy, exuberant, optimistic, happy, self-reliant, vigorous and expressive. There is more laughter, more noise, more singing, new contentment and relaxation, and less withdrawal than at Thirteen. Yet Fourteen can also be seen to be quiet and relaxed. There is

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a robustness and versatility consistent with Jupiter.

In general, for most Fourteens, their health is 'not just "good" but "really wonderful." Fourteen loves living. As the parents in the Gesell research remarked, "He's just full of life"; "She has burst out all over." Fourteens have that Jupiter ability to put the task before the feelings, so that they may just put up with illness if it means they can do what they want to do. They have a good appetite, although they are becoming more discriminating in their eating. Gesell noted that they are now 'especially aware of the smell of food, either the smell that repels or the smell that beckons....[they are] also aware of the consistency of foods'.

All this is indicative of the new sensitivity in all their senses at this age which needs to be met with understanding. It may be that sometimes Fourteens cover their hyper-sensitivity with reactions like noisiness, perhaps like when younger children become hyperactive when tired. For the one thing most Fourteens have in common is a loud voice, not what one would normally associate with more extreme

## *Sense of self*

There is a new self-assurance in Fourteen, despite the pressures of mounting energy. An experienced teacher once described to me the gesture of Fourteens as "I am." He described more doubting Fifteens, in comparison, as "Who am I?" Fourteens have a growing comfortableness and ability to be themselves and accept their former selves. Gesell descriptions illustrate this:

The boy or girl of this age seems "so like himself." He feels like himself even though he might desire a few changes—a little less

sensitivity! It can help to watch for this with Fourteens, and find ways to help them to find a quiet space if they need it. One teacher of Fourteens got positive results from doing a short period of relaxation in class when the students were being particularly noisy and over-active after a break.

When there are too many demands on them, they may get headaches, or show their stress in tensional outlets like nail biting and occasionally in nervous children, in trembling. This is consistent with the growth emphasis being in the head and nerve sense system at Fourteen. Again, teaching Fourteens to ask for, and how to give a neck massage, is helpful in increasing their self-awareness and empowering them to relieve stress related pain without recourse to drugs.

In vision development Fourteens have fewer visual complaints and show a far-sightedness consistent with their more expansive interest in the world; this is a change from Thirteen who read more and showed a tendency to near sightedness. Vision development is a good place to observe how physiology can reflect psychological growth.

fat, a little taller, a little shorter. Young people are now aware of their difference from other people and of their own uniqueness, even though they are not quite ready to accept it fully. They are still influenced a bit by the idealized perfect form... [yet] Fourteens feel good about themselves. You may hear them say, "I like myself the way I am." ...Many are able to look back on their former selves with more perspective, more tolerance.



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So Fourteens feel they are coming into their own. Despite a strong identification with the group, they have an insistent interest in their own characteristics as an individual and in their individual biography. In a Steiner Waldorf school curriculum, this is the time that the students record their own life story as well as interviewing an older person to write a short biography—a process that encourages them to use their new expansive thinking to contemplate the full span of a human life.

It is important for Fourteen that instruction, guidance and counselling is individualised for there is now more receptivity to individual guidance, at home, in community activities and at school. The building of an individual relationship through individual recognition and conversation is very important in working with teenagers. Without it they can easily feel overlooked in busy homes, in class and elsewhere.

Fourteens are seeking ideals, in the world and in human beings. They identify with characters in fiction, biography, music and film etc. It is

## *Emotional development*

Fourteens' emotional life reflects more Jupiter qualities: the buoyancy, joviality, sociability, optimism, exuberance even in their occasional angry outbursts. Fourteens enjoy life and are reasonable in temper, despite their loudness, and have the confidence to be open about their feelings. They may not be so open at Fifteen, a time of Saturn qualities, when they deliberately protect themselves by disclosing less.

Fourteens also have their challenges! In their 'down' moments and their 'nasty places', they can be moody, irritable and make a big issue of little things. Times of inner confusion can produce outbursts of violent anger or distressed

helpful for caring adults to consider just what models of human beings and what values are available to their teenager (including themselves of course) and whether those models are worth emulating! Parents need to be aware of what their teenagers are watching and listening to so that they can help their teenager bring more consciousness to this. Smart phones and other new technologies means they have good and bad at their fingertips. For example, violent and misogynist content in the lyrics of something like hip-hop can be brought to their attention and discussed. What is worthy (maybe the music or the poetry) can be admired, but unhealthy content can be questioned and seen in the context of their own sense of fairness and their own values. In this way they individualize their judgement of it and do not take it on unconsciously. More meaningful role models can be identified together? Current teen idols and teenagers who are doing good things for the world and the many teenagers who are courageously beating the odds against them can be researched, or maybe your teenager can tell you about them.

crying. As they do not cry often this should be seen as a cry for help and not treated lightly—look for the reasons. Generally their short explosive outbursts of yelling do not last long. Their sad moods or depression are generally outstripped by happy times.

Fourteens' main problem is that they have a tendency to go out of bounds in their exuberance and end up in a confused tangle. They want to include too much in their life and end up getting swamped by it all (they may be late, or have to run off early from a function!) So Fourteens may need more adult help in planning and prioritising than they think,

despite their best efforts to do it well. But they need help in ways that empower them, not take over from them. Clarifying questions, offering a little support here and there, and teaching them to be more effective, to prioritise what is important, what is urgent can be helpful here. (Steve Covey's books on highly effective people might offer an independent authority's opinion here).

Fourteens may also have some worries— a large number worry about school— but generally

### *Relationships, family and friends*

Fourteens are friendly, gregarious, unconstrained and can be cordially cooperative. They have a sociable sense of humour. However, their sociability is rather different from the sociability of those with Venus and Moon qualities. While Fourteens are frank and communicative, they are also more self-contained and more independent rather than confiding and dependent. We saw this in the quite young Jupiter stages, but now they can be more mature in their independence. Fourteens now show awareness of, and interest in other people, their opinions and how they 'tick'— they are budding psychologists.

Fourteens are also now more mature in attitudes towards adults and the family. They can see the institutional nature of the family and may be hypercritical. ("You are so old fashioned!") They can also be highly embarrassed by parental conduct, but despite this, the family circle is more genial and less tense. Disagreements are less tight and insistent. There is more mutual respect and confidence, based on increasing understanding. In relation to siblings, Fourteens are caring with young ones, but with primary school age siblings, (especially those who are eleven!) there is arguing and altercation.

they are not disturbed too deeply by things. They may also have their pet fears, but less than before— bugs, snakes, the dark etc. Gesell suggests that 'This is an age when experience may resolve the fear.' Perhaps their more robust sense of self gives them the courage to work with their fears, to evaluate better whether their reaction may be out of proportion to the actual risk and use their strong will to overcome their fear.

Fourteens have a whole gang of friends. They are anxious to be popular with age mates and are sensitive to deviations from group standards, but their outlook on difference, in keeping with their value for their own individuality, tends to be tolerant. Group loyalties, while strong, do not stop them from choosing who they want to be with. The psychology of the group frequently comes into competition with concrete demands of home, school and community. When self esteem is low, media pressures high and adult support unreliable, peer pressures are more difficult for them to handle. Social media in all its forms have added to the pressures on teens in recent years.

In friendships, boys tend to prefer boys as friends. For girls, there is more dating, but still an active interest in their girl friends. There is communication, giggling and gossiping between Fourteens, especially the girls, at every available interval all day and into the night on the phone. When the phone was an old fashioned phone in the kitchen the long social calls of teenagers were problematic enough. Now with new technologies there are even more challenges, including the threat to sleep. The technologies of phone and internet will be



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covered later, but for now it is important to consider the adolescent's need for sleep.

Research is showing that adolescents need as much sleep as younger children but few are getting it and make up for it with long sleep-ins on weekends. Suggested sleep needs are from 8.5 to 10 hours per night, with a regular sleep routine, as well as avoiding stimulation and long bouts of screen time before bed (screen time appears to lower melatonin levels which affect sleep.) Sleep deprivation compromises learning, health (including making them more prone to acne) and happiness. Encourage your teenager to be respectful of themselves in making sleep a priority and let them be proud of this.

Fourteens also show a growing generosity and benevolence towards others, although sometimes with the exception of family! As Gesell reported one father remarked, "He is finally absorbed in something outside himself." Gesell records what Fourteens wished for:

## *New thinking*

With the emphasis in physical growth back in the head, brain, and nerve sense system, in a new seven year growth cycle, Fourteens are moving into a whole new world of thought with increasing consciousness of themselves as individuals. They now have logic and abstract propositional thinking, and are not quite so emotionally precarious. They can begin to explore in new ways what is true, ideal and ethical. For some this new capacity for thought can be an intense experience; for example Gesell noted that: 'Albert Schweitzer relates how in his fourteenth year the joys of seeking for what was true and good came upon him 'like a kind of intoxication'. He felt a 'passionate need to think.'

Fourteens are not thinking of themselves alone. Rather they are thinking of the kind of world they would like to live in. First and foremost, they wish for a world at peace or for an end of wars. Then they wish for a better world in general, in which there is a "unity of nations," "a union of all religion", and "high standard of living," and "a better chance for people to grow up." More specifically they wish that there were a more properly run government ("one that wouldn't let taxes go up") and a better educational system. ...They are especially desirous of happiness for both their own family and people in general.

This reflects their benevolent interest in the whole—they are more ecumenical and global—in organizational efficiencies, in prosperity and happiness for all, like Jupiter.

As a result of this new thinking capacity, Fourteens may philosophize and show a fair measure of wisdom, as well as wit and humour. All this combines with this stage's capacity for seeing things as a whole and embracing the bigger picture of human beings, their psychology, their history, their biography and their ideals. They are now very educable in the realm of human values and social obligations.

With new capacity for rational, logical thinking, Fourteens tend to be more realistic and objective in their judgements. They can look at two sides of issues—they indulge in lengthening trains of independent thinking, weighing the pros and cons, sometimes with challenging consequences, for example, they may decide they ought to drop out of school! Like Thirteens, what they

lack in their ruminations is experience and breadth of knowledge. As with Thirteens they can find just a part of the truth and think it is the whole truth and may be difficult to persuade otherwise. The image of judging the nature of the elephant by its tail may be a useful one for helping Fourteens to realise they might have only one part of a reality. Their verbal comprehension and fluency are said to mature to four fifths of the adult level by Fourteen.

### *Sexual intercourse, alcohol and drugs*

This is an age where parents may be worrying more about what their children are doing in relation to sex, smoking, drinking alcohol and drugs, especially if the children are communicating only reluctantly with the parents. We repeat what we said at Thirteen. This is a time for awareness not panic. Some children are more at risk than others. This is the time to look at the risk factors to consider what you need to do and what your child needs to be aware of now. Then make sure you and your child are well informed about personal safety, protective behaviours and sex education.

Essentially what they need most for this is teaching about serious self-care, respect for their bodies and themselves. It will be better if you have done all this before now and can just update the information they need to their present circumstances, and reinforce the importance of self-care, but it is never too late to start. (There is a lot of information available on the internet on all this now, government health and parenting websites are a good place to start, in Australia at least. The books and videos on YouTube of Freda Briggs are highly recommended for information on protective behaviours). Note that current research (Briggs) is showing that sexual abuse, for example, may

As we have already seen in relation to the sense of self this is a time in development for idealism. It is important at this time that they have striving adults—parents, teachers, community leaders and friends— with worthwhile ideals to inspire and support them. Ideals offer hope, but when reality offers insufficient examples of these ideals in their fellow human beings and the world, there is a disappointment and loss of hope, which can result in anger, rebelliousness, increasing sadness and fear.

be even more prevalent amongst boys than girls and that it has long been under-reported by boys and men.

First sexual intercourse. With puberty well established in most by now, many young people are now mature enough to be involving themselves in 'sexual activity', which a recent Australian government report (Stathopolous 2012) said was normal even for Twelves. But they are not referring to full sexual intercourse here. There is not a great deal of information on the timing of first sexual intercourse, because most studies look at mean ages and concentrate on 15 years and beyond.

The Guttmacher Institute in the USA suggest that fewer than 2% children have had intercourse by their twelfth birthday and of these, twice as many are boys, not girls. This predominance of boys in the first intercourse figures by age group continues up to and including fourteen years and is particularly interesting considering most boys are a year behind the girls in sexual development at this stage. The figures for boys and girls are more similar from about fifteen years on. The Guttmacher charts suggest that about 3% girls and about 5% boys have had intercourse at thirteen. At fourteen these figures rise to about



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5% girls and 10% boys and at fifteen to about 13% for girls 18% for boys. For comparison, The Kinsey Institute put the figures for fifteen much higher (25% for men, 26% for women).

Such figures are also different in different countries (Scandinavia, first intercourse tends to occur earlier, and in areas like India, China much later) and for different races (Afro-Americans begin sexual activity earlier, for example). But for our purposes, for considering the care of our Fourteens, we are looking at about 5 to 10% of them experiencing first full sexual intercourse. This is maybe two or three per class of thirty students.

But statistics, however vague, can be misleading in other ways too. You need to look at all the factors which increase the likelihood of sexual intercourse occurring with your child. Some of these risk factors are environmental: the use of alcohol or drugs at the time (very significant risk), an environment where alcohol and drugs are easily available and are approved of by attendant adults, where the sexual partners are older (significant risk), where there is a lack of mature adult supervision, at sleepovers where it is harder for an individual to escape from pressure, and even lack of interesting activities leading to boredom.

Some risk factors are personal, relating both to your teenager and those in their peer group with most influence. These include: previous sexual abuse (a very significant risk factor), low self esteem in the child or a parent, teenagers in serious rebellion looking for power, touch and affection, racial differences, absent parents, parents who don't care or who are not around physically or emotionally, seductive clothing being worn and so on.

Remove children with these risk factors from the statistics for first full sexual intercourse and the rates will be much lower. Note that good sex

education which stresses the need for respect within relationships actually helps to delay the timing of first sexual intercourse. Sex education should have been made available before thirteen, but information on sexual health, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases needs to be added now or updated. Making available information on natural fertility management is highly recommended for a better understanding of female sexual cycles. (See Further Reading list) It is also important to be aware of the side effects of hormonal contraception, including the oral contraceptive pill, which include mood disorders, depression and interference with later fertility, if introduced before ovulation cycles are properly established.

The importance for on-going conversations about sexuality cannot be overestimated. Increasingly children who do not receive such parental guidance are turning to pornography as a source of sex information. The majority of teenagers who use the internet at this age will have been exposed to pornography, much of this accidental or unwanted. Parents need to be aware of this and provide a perspective for their children about it. (More on the effects of pornography and an approach to dealing with it can be found in the profile for Fifteens.)

So there may not be particular concern for some parents of Fourteen but each parent needs to realistically assess the risk for their teen in each situation, and act in a reasonable way to protect them. For those with higher risks, you need to act now to help protect your teenagers, and get professional help if you feel you cannot do it by yourself. Remember that teenagers are more likely to respect your protection when it is rational and individualized to a particular situation, not based on irrational fear or lack of trust, though they may still resist at the time.

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Similarly you need to assess the risk of smoking, drinking and drug taking now. The usage of these is also relatively low for many children. It is clear from current research that the risks of long term damage from drug use are much higher for children who start taking drugs of any sort when young, and when brain and sexual development are not complete. The likelihood of using drugs is of course affected by who your child hangs out with, the sort of activities they take part in, and the attitudes of adults around them. Teenagers are at higher risk if they are mixing with older teenagers. Be clear also whether statistics are referring to children trying something once or to regular use, or over-use — there is a big difference in consequences between a polite taste, even a once off learning experience of too much alcohol, and regularly getting drunk. These things can muddy the statistics and also lead to parental panic. On the other hand, a new Australian/New Zealand longitudinal study of cannabis use before 17 years of age has shown that even low level of its use (less than once a month) affects the parameters they examined, including school leaving age, degree attainment, drug dependency and suicide. (Silins et al, The Lancet

Psychiatry, Volume 1, Issue 4. Pages 286-293 Sept 2014)

Once again, one of the most powerful strategies for parents to use in preventing drug use in their own children is to teach them to have a deep respect for the health of their bodies, through nutritious, unprocessed food, good sleep, keeping warm, wearing appropriate clothing, valuing movement and exercise, and learning respect for pain and illness processes, as symptoms of the body's need for more attention and support, including giving time for healing and recovery. This of course is best done all throughout childhood, through modelling what good care of the body involves, in illness and in health. Then when the question arises for adolescents of whether they themselves want to use alcohol and drugs, they already have a foundation for making a healthy choice, especially when they are given additional information about what these drugs do to the body. In addition if they are also emotionally healthy, one can add the question, do you really need these drugs to be happy or social, or can you be these things without them, without losing self-control and integrity?

## *Mobile phone use and technology*

By the time children are in high school, the pressure will be considerable for children to have mobile/cell phones. Most will have access to a phone for personal safety at certain times; mobile phones are very appropriate for keeping children safer when on independent excursions with friends for example. However ownership of their own phones for free use brings new responsibilities for parents to educate their children in their use, to keep them healthy, informed and safe. In Australia in 2010, 75% of Fourteens had phones, with an increasing percentage of those phones having advanced

features which allow access to the internet, social media and many other applications. The figures must be much higher now. Again in 2010 on average Australian children 11 to 18 years spent from over an hour (boys) to nearly two hours (girls) a day on their phones (Raising Children Network, 2010). Time spent has certainly increased since then with increasing internet access on phones and continually increasing applications and social media sites. There are more and more issues of concern to consider here regarding health, personal safety, cyber safety, inappropriate information and



addiction. Parenting and government websites in Australia ( and well researched sites like the Raising Children Network) provide good base line information on many of these but even these may not be up to date with the latest trends (check the year of publishing).

A few thoughts can be offered here to help inform parents about the areas of concern so that they can find more detailed information and advice in other sources.

Firstly health factors: the effect of electromagnetic energy emissions on brain growth is still unclear and adolescents still have a huge amount of brain growth to complete. Whenever your teenager is given a phone they need to be educated about its safe use. For example it is recommended that parents encourage their children to limit their exposure by reducing call time, by not carrying the phone on the body, by making calls where reception is good, by using hands-free devices or speaker options, or by texting, etc.

Other technologies may also create health issues, depending on the amount of time they are used. The biggest health threat is possibly to sleep quantity and quality. It is recommended that parents create clear rules about when the phone can be used, when it should be switched off etc. Some children will text, Facebook chat or email through the night and we need to make clear that this is not respectful of their own needs. Hours of screen time and especially video games before bed, may also affect melatonin levels and sleep.

Secondly, personal safety. At Thirteen children have access to social media sites like Facebook, which allows them their own account. Children need to be taught about cyber safety early. They need to know that no information or photo is "safe" to put up on the internet or send to

someone, even for a few seconds, because other people can instantly save anything on their screen. They need to know other people can identify them by putting together random bits of personal information, just as we adults also can be identified in metadata. They need to consider not sharing personal information, especially photos which they would not wish everyone to see for the rest of their life! They need to know about cyber bullying and that it is taken seriously under Australian law. They need to know they can come to you and you will do something about it (schools can advise you on this).

Thirdly, learning the wise use of technology. Technology is there to serve us, not dominate us or our lives. We need to seek a healthy balance between using technology for the remarkable things it offers and giving ourselves times with each other and in nature which are technology free. This means modelling the sensible use and control of technology for children. Your children may be way ahead of you in its use, but what you are teaching here are the principles of healthy living, about making space for the sacredness of relationships and conversation, even time to truly meet oneself.

You need to teach them by your own behaviour that they have the freedom to control their own availability, and protect important times in the day, and especially sleep. Show them that you can give priority to important times like meal times together, family conversations, 'sacred times' and sleep times. Make it a rule in your family that "Here there is time for us." Answering services and texts make all this possible without too much pain or inconvenience. Rules about no texts, chat, or phone calls at the family dinner times emphasise this. Other people can wait.

Teach them to be strong in saying no, in prioritising, sorting the important and the urgent from the unimportant and the non-urgent, turning technology off, and ignoring the phones and texts that ding and sing and raucously break the intimacy. Adults today are not often good examples of this either. Teach them about down time, private time, and uninterrupted conversation times. The world is forgetting these things and they may need to be redefined and taught, just as once we taught social etiquette. Then of course we also need to respect their need to communicate with friends and allow times for that to happen also.

Fourthly, parents need to inform themselves about just what their beloved teenagers are accessing. This is not to pry and control, but to bring a bigger perspective and your own understanding to what they are experiencing through the new technologies. Teenagers may be more savvy than you in using social media and accessing new applications, but you need to know what they are doing, and what they are looking at so that you can help them have a context for what they are seeing and using. What applications do they use, how do they experience them? What do they think of the different social media sites and how do they use them? Learn from them, take an interest in them, be excited with them, but bring wisdom and perspective to what they are doing. From this place you can negotiate wise strategies for living with digital media.

Fifthly, we need to acknowledge the danger of distraction and addiction. Technology can be very distracting. It is important to teach children early on to become aware of when the technology is distracting them from what they want to/should be doing and what helps them to not be distracted. This can be a real opportunity for strengthening will power and

raising consciousness about addictive behaviours. Make it an exercise in will power and self-control for the teenagers themselves to learn to resist distraction (rather than resist the parent trying to get the teenager to concentrate on the right task.) For example, when teenagers have their own phone you can teach them to ignore the five notifications sitting at the top of the phone screen and to go straight to whatever they went to their phone for, to do what they planned, and leave without checking those notifications. What helps them do this? Self-talk, small rewards? When they can learn the best ways to keep themselves on task they have learnt a valuable lesson in self-restraint and control of will.

Such conscious challenges in self-control also provides an opportunity to raise their awareness of the addictive nature of some new technologies, particularly computer games, especially as they get more and more sophisticated. Even the simplest brain improving games can be addictive as one tries to better one's last score by playing just one more game. What is important is to be conscious of one's level of compulsion to play or freedom to stop playing.

In serious addiction, self-deception can interfere with one's capacity to judge whether one can stop the behaviour. Teenagers need to know that the new fast paced, hyper-real quality of these new games are *designed* to make you addicted to playing, to make you choose to play that game over anything else. They are designed to engage all our senses, 'realistic' visuals on huge screens, surround sound, controls that also give you feedback (by vibrating/shaking etc). How do you come back to homework and healthy sleep after that? Increased consciousness of the effects, strong will power and good sense.



### *Risk and Trust*

One could also hope that their new powers of thinking and evaluating can also be used in assessing risk and personal safety in the new social situations they meet regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and in sexual encounters and also in the use of new technologies. While new research is showing that teenagers are not good at evaluating risk in the moment, it may be that *healthy* teenagers can be far more sensible than this implies. The big question is how do we keep them emotionally healthy enough so that they do not feel the compulsion to be impulsive, rebellious and vulnerable to peer pressure to do risky things? How do we teach them to sensibly assess risk and voluntarily avoid situations which are unsafe or ask for support to make them safer—for example to be picked up at a reasonable time from a party or to avoid a

sleepover with more irresponsible peers. Unfounded parental fears and reactions do not help here. Working with teenagers individually in building trust and encouraging responsible behaviour does help.

If you have taught your children well, trust them. There is a sad danger that parents who have trusted their children up to this point suddenly panic and withdraw their trust. Sure, teenagers may lie and make mistakes, just as we ourselves may have at their age, but it is more helpful to still have faith in them to grow to be responsible for their health and well being and to help them to learn from mistakes and make sure they are well informed. That makes them stronger and wiser. Trustworthiness comes out of being believed in and in being given the opportunities to show trustworthiness first.

### *Need for individual recognition and acceptance*

As has been said in the profiles from Ten onwards, it is incredibly important for children to recognise the importance not only of our need to belong to our social group, but also for each individual to be true to him or her self. We too, need to be true to our individual children. They need to be truly met, *recognised as an individual*, with *acceptance* for who they are in temperament, in abilities, in interests. They need to be *seen*. When you see them, they can *see themselves* reflected back from you. This is a key to healthy development. The biggest danger for most of you likely to be reading this, especially parents, is that life is so full and stressful that it gives little time for 'sacred space' with each child, private time together when you turn the phone off, allow no interruptions and give yourselves time to be together. Of course, if

your teenager is already very rebellious, they may not want to hear about spending time with you alone, but they need to hear that you care about doing it and you will have to find ways to convince them that you are serious about giving up things to do it. This deep recognition and acceptance of them as an individual also needs to be felt coming from all the adults in their lives: parents, teachers, the counsellor, their coach. The power of this recognition cannot be over-emphasised. Research has shown that the memory of having even one such person who truly recognised them as an individual, at some point in their life, may prevent a suicide.

The other danger to young people is in *parental expectations*, which sometimes have crept in so slowly and subtly you may not even think they

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are there, and the children may think they are their own. These can be expectations that your children will be like you, have your values, have your drives and social, educational and economic ambitions. If they deviate from these we are often quick to deny them approval. Fear is often a driving force in this dynamic. Of course we want what we believe is best for our children, but there needs to be the freedom for them to make their own choices as they mature. The challenge is to *give them time*, to *trust* that what we have given them in all the years before now will bring them to a healthy place eventually. It might take another 14 years but that is okay. It actually takes that long to really

grow up into our true selves (a whole Saturn cycle, 28 years, the astrologers would point out.)

What they need most from you now is that you respect and accept who they are and that you are a worthy authority in their lives, prepared to stand up for what you believe in, including for their safety and well being. This is a complex road which needs integrity, wisdom, honesty, strength and courage as well as the willingness to look at your own fears and neurotic tendencies, which frequently teenagers can quite accurately and painfully identify for you. It needs conscious, creative and courageous living with children, but it will be worth the effort.

*So what do we find at Fourteen? More expansiveness, more noise, love of drama, argument for its own sake, developing interest in the world, the broader picture, social conscience, more ideals. They are interested in themselves, but also in others, with an open and more honest approach to the world. There are definitely some of the gifts of Jupiter qualities here. With the right support for them, a sense of humour, energy and some ear plugs, parenting and working with Fourteens can be a joy.*

## Further Reading

Bates Ames, Louise, Ilg, Frances L., & Baker, Sidney M. *Your Ten-to-Fourteen-Year Old* (A Dell Trade Paperback New York 1988) A Gesell Institute of Child Development book.

Payne, Kim John, with Lisa M. Ross *Simplicity Parenting Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier and More Secure kids.* (Ballantine Books Trade Paperbacks, New York, 2009)

*Cycle Savvy: The Smart Teen's Guide to the Mysteries of Her Body*, Toni Weschler, HarperCollins, New York, 2006

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