



# The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen

By Robert Epstein

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This groundbreaking book argues that adolescence is an unnecessary period of life that people are better off without. Robert Epstein, former editor in chief of Psychology Today, shows that teen turmoil is caused by outmoded systems put in place a century ago which destroyed the continuum between childhood and adulthood. Where this continuum still exists in other countries, there is no adolescence. Isolated from adults, American teens learn everything they know from their media-dominated peers the last people on earth they should be learning from, says Epstein. Epstein explains that our teens are highly capable in some ways more capable than adults and argues strongly against infantilizing young people. We must rediscover the adult in every teen, he says, by giving young people adult authority and responsibility as soon as they can demonstrate readiness. This landmark book will change the thinking about teens for decades to come.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Perhaps it is time for a paradigm shift in how we understand the tumultuous time we call adolescence. Dr. Epstein's landmark book may be just what we need to help enhance our understanding of and better serve those moving through this complex period of life. --Drew Pinsky, M.D., Co-Host, *Loveline*; medical director, Department of Chemical

This is a profoundly important book. Dr. Epstein is raising issues about our young people that we need to think about and evaluate carefully. Generally, I think the institutions that serve our young are sound, but this book points to some obvious problems most especially the fact that our young people are largely isolated from the adult world. If you care about America's young, this is a must read. --Dr. Joyce Brothers, author & columnist

The Case Against Adolescence is one of the most revolutionary books I have ever read. --Albert Ellis, Ph.D., The Albert Ellis Institute (from the Foreword)

#### From the Publisher

A revolutionary proposal for raising responsible and happy teenagers.

#### From the Inside Flap

##### Praise for *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen*

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"Epstein's book presents a serious and bold challenge to widely held views about teenagers: that they are inherently irresponsible, that they must be shielded from adult challenges, that they are not capable of making sound decisions about matters of health. Epstein demonstrates in a rigorous and persuasive way that teens are in fact highly capable--in some respects even more capable than adults. By shielding and protecting young people from adulthood, we have isolated them from their elders, from their spiritual roots, and from their heritage, leaving many of them angry and confused in the spiritually empty world of teen culture. We need to reexamine our basic assumptions about young people, and Epstein shows us how." --Deepak Chopra, *Life After Death: The Burden of Proof*

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"I believe what Dr. Epstein is saying one hundred percent. Young people have the ability to do great things; they just never have the opportunity to do them. They're also rarely placed in situations where they have to do them. We treat teens as if they're just kids, assuming they can't do very much, but when they're put into tough situations, they tend to perform just as well or even better than adults. As a teen I successfully impersonated an airline pilot, a medical doctor, a lawyer, and a college instructor. Imagine what I could have

done if I had actually been encouraged to develop my adult capabilities. And imagine what today's teens might be able to do if they weren't so completely cut off from the adult world." --Frank W. Abagnale, *Catch Me If You Can*; president, Abagnale & Associates; author

"Retired and in poor health, it is extremely rare for me to endorse any book these days. However, I feel powerfully called to write in support of Dr. Robert Epstein's book *The Case Against Adolescence*. I heartily believe in the validity of what he is saying. Furthermore, I believe what he is saying to have vast consequence for our society. All of America should take note of it." --M. Scott Peck, M.D., *The Road Less Traveled*

"The American education system, as we know it, was designed during a period of rapid industrialization. The mission of schools was to inculcate 'industrial discipline' as a means preparing our young people, in factory-like fashion, to work in the new industrial world. That antiquated system no longer prepares our young for the real world they will be facing in the years to come, and, as Dr. Epstein shows, it also isolates young people from adults in ways that have unfortunate consequences. If you care about the future of our young people, *The Case Against Adolescence* is an essential read." --Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock and Revolutionary Wealth*

"Here are America's youth, regarded keenly, knowingly-with many popular assumptions and notions set aside in favor of an accurate and thoughtful portrayal of our young fellow citizens, and too, many of the rest of us, who may fail them by overlooking their achievements and possibilities." --Robert Coles, M.D., professor of psychiatry, Harvard University; recipient, Pulitzer Prize

"Robert Epstein's critique of our conventional view of adolescence is timely. Of all its wide implications, perhaps the most significant is the one for education. Treating young people as adults and giving them the opportunity to embrace responsibility are strategies that the empirical research and analysis of Epstein's work justify. This is a vital book for parents and policy makers on the state and federal levels. It is a long overdue contribution." --Leon Botstein, president, Bard College; *Jefferson's Children: Education and the Promise of American Culture*

Teenagers are not children. Dr. Epstein convincingly demonstrates the harm caused by treating them that way. With an intellectual honesty not often seen, this book cuts through the mountain of prejudice and negative stereotypes and shows teens as they once were, and some day will be again. This is an important book, and one that strikes the next nail in the coffin of the bigoted "storm and stress" view of adolescence. This book should be required reading for all youth workers, all parents trying to better understand their kids, all politicians setting youth policy, and most especially for teens who instinctively recognize the injustice and harm of our system. This book is a powerful tool for articulating that injustice." --Alex Koroknay-Palicz, president & executive director, National Youth Rights Association

"Dr. Epstein has written a very provocative essay about adolescence. His arguments deserve serious consideration and open debate." --Ellen Langer, Ph.D., Mindfulness; Professor of Psychology, Harvard University

"While human evolution has for hundreds of millennia trusted teens to be fully competent adults and parents, our present culture has somehow found it convenient to view them as children. Robert Epstein makes a powerful case for correcting this costly error." --Jean Liedloff, *The Continuum Concept*

"Parents puzzled about the reasons for changes in child-rearing since they were children may find some answers in Robert Epstein's argument about what he calls 'the artificial extension of childhood.'" --George F. Will, columnist

"Epstein's book on adolescence is a fresh and timely look at what makes teens miserable, and how their condition can be helped. It is a very original approach, sure to ignite discussion and controversy. A great deal of what he says is right on the money, and few people have written on this subject with his combination of expert knowledge and clear prose." --Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow; Professor of Management, Claremont Graduate Center

"*The Case Against Adolescence* constructs a powerful argument against trivializing a significant fraction of the population in the interests of an illusion. Whether you're a parent, a teacher, a policy maker, or a

recovering victim of enforced childishness, you need to read this book." --John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down and The Underground History of American Education*; former New York City and New York State Teacher of the Year

"Dr. Epstein offers a compelling mixture of historical evidence and modern insight into the present problem of infantilization of youth. If we trust our youth with the inevitable responsibilities of modern life sooner rather than later, we can reinvigorate our society. Dr. Epstein's ideas provide an academic framework for a number of issues-like allowing teens to vote in municipal elections at age 16-that are close to my heart and crucial for the future of American society. In this iconoclastic work, Dr. Epstein shows not only how much we lose by belittling teens, but also how much we stand to gain by empowering them." --Gale A. Brewer, Member, New York City Council

"We are all individual and desire to be treated as such. Dr. Epstein makes a good case for adolescents to be treated not as a group with a formula, but as individual unique people." --Suzanne Somers, actress and author "Because of my family's troubled history and because I'm the mother of two teens,I have a deep interest in the mental health of young people. This book has opened my eyes, and it will open yours too. We've completely isolated teens from the people they're about to become, and we've trapped them in a meaningless world controlled by peers and media. We've forgotten how capable young people are, and they know it and are frustrated. We need to completely reexamine how we treat America's teens." --Mariel Hemingway, actress

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