

## Early Adolescent Problem Behavior<sup>1</sup>

Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>

Transcribed from the Family Album Radio Program, a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at [familyalbumradio.org](http://familyalbumradio.org)

*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*



Credits: Stockbyte

You've probably known a parent of a middle-schooler who has lamented that aliens abducted their sweet child and returned a different, not so sweet preteen being. Early adolescence is a time of change in the relationship between parent and adolescent, and both have to adjust. Although most families weather these changes without serious difficulties, some families do have problems.

Some research shows that when parents are critical and angry with their young teens, they're more likely to misbehave at school and exhibit other bad behaviors. But youth also may act in hostile ways toward their parents.

Recent research studied more than 400 youth ages 11 to 14 and their parents to better understand youth problem behavior, hostility between parents and young teens, and the influence of peers. The research confirmed that when parents and adolescents were hostile with each other, even at low levels of hostility, young teens behaved in problematic ways, such as misbehaving at school, or lying and cheating. Hostility between parents and teens seemed to take a toll on parents' energy and patience, too, and they found it more difficult to set and follow consistent and effective rules (Buehler, 2006).

There are ways for families—parents *and* youth—to make a smoother transition to the teen years, such as to learn strategies for communicating respectfully with each other, managing conflict, and setting reasonable rules and limits. These patterns are best begun earlier in childhood, before families cross the sometimes-rocky terrain to adolescence.

1. This document is FAR1217, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 515. Published on EDIS March 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. "Family Album" is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at <http://www.familyalbumradio.org>.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

[http://www.radiosource.net/radio\\_stories/515.mp3](http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/515.mp3)

[http://www.radiosource.net/radio\\_stories/515.wav](http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/515.wav)

## References

Buehler, C. (2006). Parents and peers in relation to early adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68, 109-124.