

BRICK TWP. BOY'S DEATH LATEST IN RASH OF TEENS PLAYING WITH BOMBS

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ) - June 6, 1995

- Author/Byline: BYLINE: Associated Press
- Edition: Cape May, Cumberland & Ocean
- Section: Region
- Page: C3

The weekend death of a Brick Township boy who was playing with gunpowder follows a recent rash of bomb-making experiments by New Jersey teenagers.

Child psychiatrists say playing with explosives gives teens a sense of power and attention, and satisfies their desire for excitement. Feelings of invincibility, meanwhile, cause them to ignore the danger.

Miller Newton is the author of "Adolescence, Guiding Youth Through the Perilous Ordeal," and president of KIDS of North Jersey Inc., a treatment program for adolescents with conduct disorders.

He said playing with explosives makes teenagers feel important.

"One of the big issues in adolescence is figuring out who you are, and every day your self-esteem goes up and down like ungelled Jello. You're looking for ways to be a big deal," he said.

"A disproportionate amount of shimmer, glaring attention is given to big deal, violent kinds of things, like the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma," Newton said.

Anthony Marino Jr., a child psychiatrist at the Carrier Foundation, a psychiatric hospital in Belle Mead, takes it a step further.

"There's a desire to be in charge and in control, to feel like they have some power and that this would be one way of doing it. If it's then used to destroy someone or hurt someone, that's a second way of being in control," he said.

Another reason teens are attracted to bombs is the thrill, said Newton.

"We've produced a culture of getting high, a momentary euphoria. You can do it through drugs, you can do it through sex or for kids - violence," Newton said.

"There can be some excitement in watching something explode or for some children that set fires, watching the fire," Marino said. "That could be a way of stimulating yourself so you have some excitement."

Newton said research shows that violent activity affects chemicals in the brain to produce a "rush."

"They're using violent activity to produce a rush like a kid using coke or speed and they get off on that. It's sad, look at the consequences. Kids are blowing themselves up."

Twelve-year-old Justin Szuba of Brick Township died Saturday when gunpowder he was experimenting with exploded, sending fragments of a carbon dioxide cartridge through his heart, authorities said.

Last month two Morris County teens made a bomb using instructions they got through a home computer. They tried to detonate it in the hollow of a tree, but it misfired, injuring one of them.

Marino said anger or frustration could fuel the desire to explode things.

"Sometimes people don't think very clearly when they're angry, so the destructive impulse can be directed someplace other than where it should be appropriately directed," he said.

Marino said boys seem to get involved with explosives more than girls because they're more likely to be near dangerous things.

"Some of it may just be a normal developmental stage, that boys would hear about the use of firearms related to hunting, for example, or be around guns or explosives," he said.

And even though most of the teens who play with explosives are aware of their dangers, many feel they're immune, Marino said.

"Most children ... don't have a sense of the finality of death or the possibility that if they get hurt it could be something permanent, (and that) can lead them not to consider the long-term serious consequences.

"They feel invincible and immortal," he said.

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It's normal for adolescent to move away from parents

Houston Chronicle (TX) (Published as Houston Chronicle) - September 21, 1995

- Author/Byline: JEFF HERRING, Knight-Ridder Newspapers
- Edition: 2 STAR
- Section: HOUSTON
- Page: 2
- Column: Focus

Q: As our 13-year-old daughter moves into her teen-age years, it seems she is moving farther and farther away from us. Is this normal? What can we do?

A: In answer to your first question, yes, it can be very normal for an adolescent to begin to pull away from parents.

A common example of this is how, all of a sudden, your teen won't come within 20 feet of you at the mall. If you already have experienced this, take heart, you are not alone.

I say that this pulling away can be very normal because there are certain extremes that are not normal and are cause for concern.

Adolescence is a time for establishing an identity separate from family and those around you. The curious part is that some adolescents, while trying to define themselves uniquely, are in groups where they all seem to look the same.

As I sat in the food court at the mall the other day with my little boy, an older gentleman at the next table and I struck up a conversation. One of the interesting things he said was that it looks as if kids today are in a contest to see who can dress the worst. While this may or may not be true, the goal is still to establish an identity that is uniquely their own.

One of the many paradoxes of this stage of life is that while one normal need of adolescents is to establish their own identity, at the same time another just-as-strong need is to have a sense of belonging to a group.

Author and therapist Miller Newton, in his new book, "Adolescence: Guiding Youth Through the Perilous Ordeal" (W.W. Norton, \$27), gives us some insight into what is going on here.

He identifies three stages: withdrawal, isolation and re-emergence. Adolescents will begin to withdraw, at times will even isolate themselves and then eventually will re-emerge as beginning young adults.

In answer to your second question - "What can we do?" - here are some specific things, based on the ideas I've mentioned, that parents can do:

Allow some room for "developmental" withdrawal. This can help prevent further isolation.

And it's important to remember that while teen-agers may be feeling some of what you felt at their age, the way they handle it may look dramatically different.

While you are allowing for some normal withdrawal, keep a careful and watchful eye on them and stay involved in their lives.

The things teen-agers can get mixed up in as they withdraw and even isolate themselves can be very damaging.

One way to stay involved is to know your kids' friends, their friends' parents, their schoolteachers, coaches and anyone else that sees your child regularly. The more eyes you have out there, the better. Remember the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child."

Remember that, much like the caterpillar, cocoon and butterfly, children will re-emerge. The trick is to maintain the kind of relationship during this phase of withdrawal that will allow for a stronger relationship when they do re-emerge.

This can be done through avoiding power struggles, which no one wins, and learning to pick your battles. Decide what is important and go from there, and let a lot of little things go.

Guiding your child through adolescence is one of the biggest challenges that parents face. Knowing when to hold on and when to let go can make a huge difference in the parent-child relationship

- Record: HSC09211297907
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TEENAGE WITHDRAWAL STARTS THE PROCESS OF ADULT TRANSFORMATION

Seattle Times, The (WA) (Published as THE SEATTLE TIMES) - September 28, 1995

- Author/Byline: JEFF HERRING, KNIGHT-RIDDER NEWSPAPERS
- Edition: FINAL
- Section: SCENE
- Page: E2
- Column: REAL LIFE

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A common example of this is how, all of a sudden, your teen won't come within 20 feet of you at the mall. If you have already experienced this, take heart, you are not alone.

I say that this pulling away can be very normal because there are certain extremes that are not normal and a cause for concern.

In a child's development, adolescence is a time for establishing an identity separate from family and peers. The curious part is that some adolescents, while trying to define themselves uniquely, are in groups where they all seem to look the same.

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