

Everyone Is Responsible

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Generally, personal responsibility begins at an early age and is seen as a continuous process, whereby learning takes place through experience and exposure. During this time, children are taught at home, at the playground, at school, and in other situations to which they are exposed. Parents, caregivers, teachers, and all adults who participate in the learning activities are influential in how personal responsibility is acquired. During adolescence (perhaps as pre-teens) young people are increasingly exposed to a wider range of socialization; they become preoccupied with body changes, they seek acceptance and close relationships with peers, and their desire for independence and less contact with authority figures are most apparent.

How adolescents apply or utilize the early experiences of personal responsibility depends to some extent on their attitudes toward those individuals who are influential in their lives and the attitudes of society toward them. As contributors to this continuous process of learning, each person plays a unique role in helping teenagers and young adults develop new and more mature relationships with peers of both sexes, to adopt socially acceptable roles, and to plan for the future.

As our society becomes more complex, personal responsibility in pregnancy prevention/planning will no doubt require new strategies to help teenagers and young adults to deal with self-esteem, peer pressure, and personal gratification, as well as varied health and social needs related to childbearing and childrearing. Life planning will require participation from family members, peers, healthcare providers, educators, community and religious leaders, political officials, and others in order to achieve a measure of success.

Dr. Young is a former practitioner/administrator of social work and education in the Department of Social Work Services at Mount Sinai Medical Center. Currently, she maintains faculty position as Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Community and Preventative Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She has a long history of participation in leadership roles on non-profit boards and organizations providing services to children, adolescents, and family groups as well as those involved in education, health, and public service; including the American Public Health Association, the National Association of Social Workers, New Alternatives for Children, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America.