



## Wellbeing Insights

### Three Key Questions Adolescents Ask Themselves

I would like to think I have some understanding of the challenges and joys of being a teenager in today's society. However, I also appreciate that I cannot fully comprehend or fathom what it is really like to be a Gen Z or iGen teenager.

So much has changed compared to when I was a teenager – approximately 40 years ago! Back when I was 16, I rode my bike to school each day, would look forward to kicking the footy on the road with my Dad, siblings and neighbours each afternoon, and I particularly loved Wednesday nights because the A-Team was on TV. It was also the one night I would be allowed to ring Jeanette, my girlfriend, whom I had just started going out with!

In some ways things are so different now, and for me personally some things haven't changed too much. Now 40 years on, I still rode my bike this morning (albeit the bike is a bit fancier), I had a kick of the footy with my son Jack, and Jeanette and I enjoyed a chat together as we completed a crossword! I didn't watch an episode of the A-Team, but I suspect I could've found it on some streaming platform and have watched Mr. T and the team bring a plan together.

More recently, Jeanette and I have had the privilege of actively parenting and supporting our four children through adolescence (our youngest turns 18 next month). Each child experienced their own ups and downs and did their best to navigate the many physical, emotional, and social changes that were occurring. Also, over the past twenty years as a teacher, Head of Year, Head of House, and Head of Boarding I have had the privilege of caring for hundreds, if not thousands, of teenagers.

From my experiences, I believe there are three key questions adolescents grapple with as they grow, regress, develop and mature between the ages of thirteen to nineteen. (I'm sure there are more likely 100 key questions, but that's too many for a blog!). In the early stages of adolescence the key question is "*Am I normal?*" And this is no easy question, as what even is normal and who defines it? Personally, as a late bloomer, I remember being regularly worried that I wasn't quite normal.

During the middle stages of adolescence the question evolves to "*Who am I?*" And an important follow-up question is and "Do I like who I am?" Liking yourself does not automatically mean liking everything about yourself or liking everything you do. Rather, it means accepting and appreciating yourself for who you are. Each teenager is different and each teenager must struggle their way through this question and hopefully discover their own acceptable answers.



In late adolescence the key question progresses to “Where am I going?” This involves the teenager considering what is important to them, the direction they wish to be heading, the people they wish to be connected to, and the contribution they wish to make.

At **my manifesto**, we have enjoyed developing our 7-Step process with a range of 18 – 22 year-olds. From their feedback, and from reading their personal manifestos it has been uplifting to see the clarity they have gained from exploring the twenty-one exercises and responding to the seven significant questions.

Encouraging young adults to sit with powerful and significant questions feels more important than ever, partly due to the current pace of society, and partly due to the incredible number of choices, opportunities, and decisions they need to consider.

Of course, our 7-Step process is not limited to young adults, in fact, as we continue to learn alongside our clients, there appears to be universal value in expressing your personal manifesto. Earlier this week, Sue had the tremendous honour of assisting Annette, a very special lady, and a much-loved mum and grandma, to co-create her personal manifesto. Well into her 80s, Annette was alert and engaged, propped up in bed within her palliative care hospital ward as Sue uncovered her many years of wisdom.

Regardless of which decade of life you are in, we believe there is great value and great rewards in completing the work of creating your personal manifesto.