



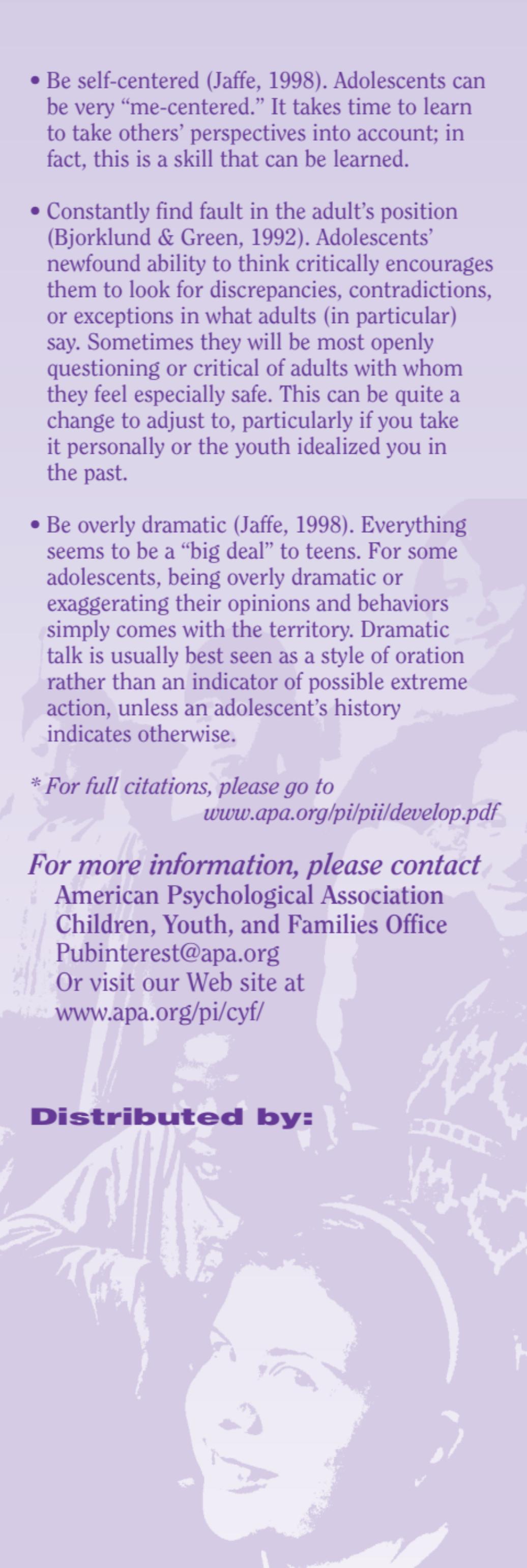
# **Yes... It's Normal for Adolescents To . . .**

From: American Psychological Association. (2002). *Developing adolescents: A reference for professionals*. Washington, DC: Author.

As adolescents develop their cognitive skills, some of their behaviors may be confusing to the adults who interact with them. These characteristics are normal, though, and should not be taken personally. Most adolescents still need guidance from adults to develop their potential for rational thinking and decision making. Stereotypes to the contrary, adolescents prefer to consult with their parents or other trusted adults in making important decisions (Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., et al., 1993).\*

## **Yes...It's Normal for Adolescents To...**

- **Argue for the sake of arguing.** Adolescents often go off on tangents, seeming to argue side issues for no apparent reason; this can be highly frustrating to many adults (Walker & Taylor, 1991). Keep in mind that, for adolescents, exercising their new reasoning capabilities can be exhilarating, and they need the opportunity to experiment with these new skills.
- **Jump to conclusions.** Adolescents, even with their newfound capacities for logical thinking, sometimes jump to startling conclusions (Jaffe, 1998). However, an adolescent may be taking a risk in staking out a position verbally, and what may seem brash may actually be bravado to cover his or her anxiety. Instead of correcting their reasoning, give adolescents the floor and simply listen. You build trust by being a good listener. Allow an adolescent to save face by not correcting or arguing with faulty logic at every turn. Try to find what is realistically positive in what is being said and reinforce that; you may someday find yourself enjoying the intellectual stimulation of the debates.

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- Be self-centered (Jaffe, 1998). Adolescents can be very “me-centered.” It takes time to learn to take others’ perspectives into account; in fact, this is a skill that can be learned.
  - Constantly find fault in the adult’s position (Bjorklund & Green, 1992). Adolescents’ newfound ability to think critically encourages them to look for discrepancies, contradictions, or exceptions in what adults (in particular) say. Sometimes they will be most openly questioning or critical of adults with whom they feel especially safe. This can be quite a change to adjust to, particularly if you take it personally or the youth idealized you in the past.
  - Be overly dramatic (Jaffe, 1998). Everything seems to be a “big deal” to teens. For some adolescents, being overly dramatic or exaggerating their opinions and behaviors simply comes with the territory. Dramatic talk is usually best seen as a style of oration rather than an indicator of possible extreme action, unless an adolescent’s history indicates otherwise.

\* *For full citations, please go to*  
*[www.apa.org/pi/pii/develop.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/pii/develop.pdf)*

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