

RETURN OF THE INNER TEENAGER

Alive and kicking with
plenty of **sassitude**



Katy Bodman



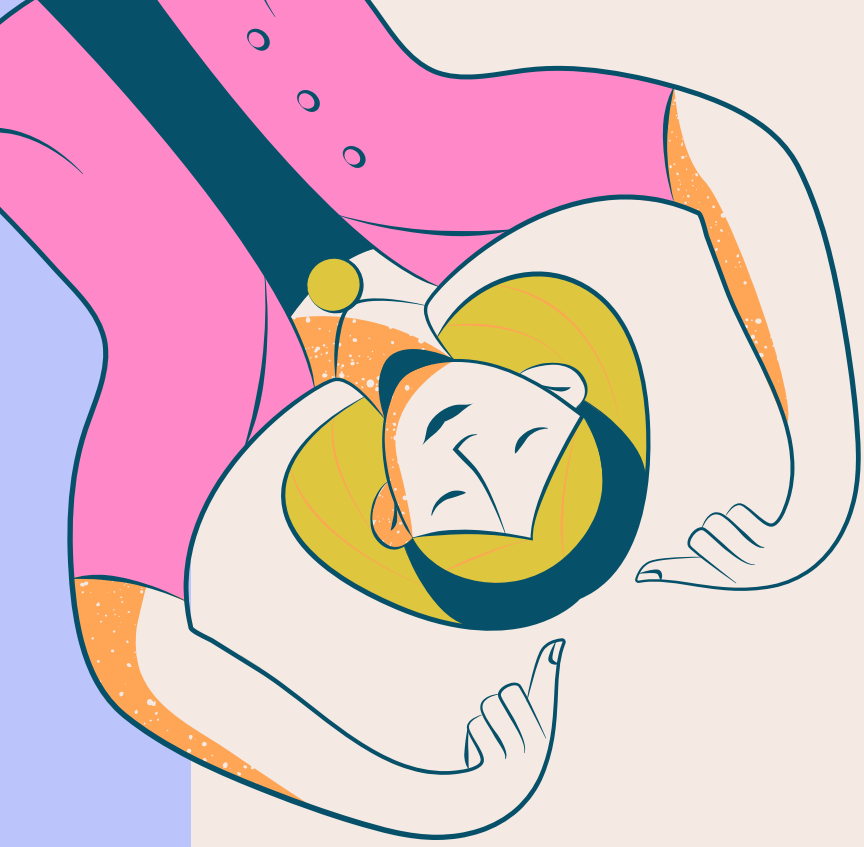
Angie Dulwich





ADOLESCENCE

- Inner child but what about teenager?
- Now thought to last from ages 10-24 (brain and social development)
- Our own window of adolescence might be different to someone else's
- Are we (and our clients) still struggling with the legacy of difficult teenage years?



Do we too easily dismiss
our teenage
configurations?



What happens in our teenage years can influence a range of outcomes in later life, including physical and mental health, relationships, academic attainment, employment and more

We may still be affected by experiences of:

- **Shame and/or guilt**
- **Humiliation**
- **Isolation**
- **Emotional overwhelm/disregulation**
- **Trauma** (62% teens experience one incidence, 19% more than three: including violence, sexual violence, domestic abuse)
- **A lack of support**



EMODIVERSITY (Jordi Quoidbach)

- Importance of adolescents experiencing and naming a rich, varied mix of emotions — not just lots of happiness or sadness, but a wide range of feelings and mixed emotions.
- Similar to the idea of biodiversity in nature:
 - a healthy ecosystem has many different species.
 - a healthy emotional life includes many different feelings.-



Teen A mostly feels "fine" or "sad" and has trouble naming anything else.

Teen B can notice feeling nervous, excited, frustrated, hopeful, jealous, proud, and calm over the course of a week.

EMODIVERSITY RESEARCH

Teens who embrace a range of emotions:

- Have better coping skills in high-stress situations (like exams, breakups, or conflicts with parents).
- Show lower levels of depressive symptoms, even when negative emotions are present.
- Build stronger emotional intelligence, which is linked to academic success and better peer relationships.



Silk, J. S., & Lee, K. H. (2022). Emotional awareness and flexibility in adolescence: Implications for resilience and psychological health. *Development and Psychopathology*, 34(3), 1015-1030

CLIENTS

We may encounter different teenage parts or configurations:

- Anxious
- Quiet or silent
- Shut down
- Suspicious
- Self-destructive
- Angry or Hostile
- 'Uncooperative'
- 'Don't know'

**We might not like
a client's teenage
parts (or our
own!)**



- Core conditions can offer what is so important for a teenage configuration: empathy, positive regard, acceptance, a genuine, caring relationship, respect for autonomy
- Concepts of Difficult Process and Tenuous Contact can help us to stay with the client



Exploring our Inner Teenager in pairs using the Hard Feelings images

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR TODAY

What was your teenage self like emotionally - what feelings came up most often?

Which parts of your inner teenager still show up in your adult life - especially under stress?

How do you respond internally when a client mirrors emotions your younger self struggled with?

Can you remember a time a client triggered your own inner teenage voice (e.g., defensiveness, rebellion, self-doubt)? How did you handle it?

If you could sit next to your 14-year-old self today, what would they need to hear from you?

What does your inner teen still crave - validation, freedom, safety, understanding? How does that shape how you show up as a therapist?

What do you do when your inner teen feels 'activated' in session - how do you ground yourself?

If your inner teen could make a playlist, draw something, or write a poem - what would they express right now?



REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

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