

## Emerging Adults

“Emerging adults” is the ever more common term for the new phase of growing up that lasts from age 22-30+.

The lifestyle of most emerging adults differs from that of their parents. The most significant differences stem from the delay in reaching four major milestones in becoming an adult: finishing education/ getting a permanent job, marriage, having children and owning a house.

[In 1960](#), by age **thirty**, 71% had passed all four milestones. In 2000, only 41% had done so. The 2010 statistics will show an even greater delay. Why? More emerging adults are attending college than ever. They are also paying more for it and taking longer to pay off their debt. [In 1973](#), only 24% of 18-24-year olds attended college. By [2010 it was](#) 40%. Since 1980 the



cost of higher education [doubled](#) in real dollars. At graduation, the average debt college students now have is \$[23,200](#). Their average income has not kept pace. Adjusting for inflation, in 1980 the average income for men, aged 25 to 34 with a bachelor's degree, was \$[52,300](#). In 2010, nearly 30 years later, it was almost exactly the same.

Buying a house is also more difficult. In 1980 the average cost of a house nationwide was \$100,000. Today it is \$330,000. Prices have more than tripled in real terms.

Fewer emerging adults are married. In 1978 almost half were married by age 28. In 2009 just a quarter are.

Finally, they are also putting off having children. According to a 2010 [Pew Research Center study](#) 9% of all births in 1990 were to women 35 and older. By 2008 that number had grown to 14%.

Emerging into adulthood is now harder and takes longer than ever.

## Upcoming Films About Lying

A [Josephson Institute study](#) on ethics shows that people under 17 are five times more likely than those over 50 to believe lying and cheating are necessary to succeed. The study also found that lying and cheating in high school makes one far more likely to lie to a spouse, customer or employer as an adult. Finally, it found that “the hole in the moral ozone” appears to be getting bigger by four percent each year. It is unlikely that these upcoming films will help.

### Take Me Home Tonight (R)

An emerging adult male, working at a video store, meets his dream girl. He lies, saying he works for Goldman Sachs so she will think more of him. Then he lies to cover up for his lies.

### Just Go with It (NR)

Adam Sandler plays a surgeon who lies to women (saying he is unhappily married) in order to bed them. He meets a dream girl, but lies to her about his lying past. He then gets a single mother and her children to lie for him, to keep the deception going. The liars eventually fall for each other. Voila, a happy ending.



# Postmodernism's Impact On Youth

Most people born before 1950 were taught a traditional point of view: this is the truth, believe it. There existed a correct worldview with a clear moral system. It was the one held by adults, who taught emerging adults, that it was right and advantageous to live accordingly. Others formed you to have a moral instinct based on a **traditional** worldview.

The next generation was taught a **modernist** worldview. Truth exists, but “you need to find it for yourself – no one can tell you.” Truth was no longer absolute but relative. It was up to you to form your own worldview, to “find yourself” and develop your own moral instinct – but you *were* looking for a consistent moral system and worldview, because you knew they would be helpful to you.

At some point you probably said to yourself, “I will not make the same mistakes my parents did.” You had begun sifting through the many “truths,” “principles,” and “points of view” for yourself. It was just the natural process of becoming an adult. You had to decide. Mom's and dad's laws about crossing the street, bedtime and table manners didn't seem as absolutely true. Truth existed but it wasn't so clear that it applied to everyone in the same way.

Today's youth grow up in a **post-modern** world. They are taught to be tolerant of not just “other views” but “*all* other views.” There is no such thing as a correct point of view.



The effect is powerful. It is no longer instinctive for youth to search for the truth, because the world just consists of all sorts of *opinions*. “Who can tell if any one of them is more right than another.” It makes it difficult for the individual teen to believe there could possibly be a true point of view for him or her.

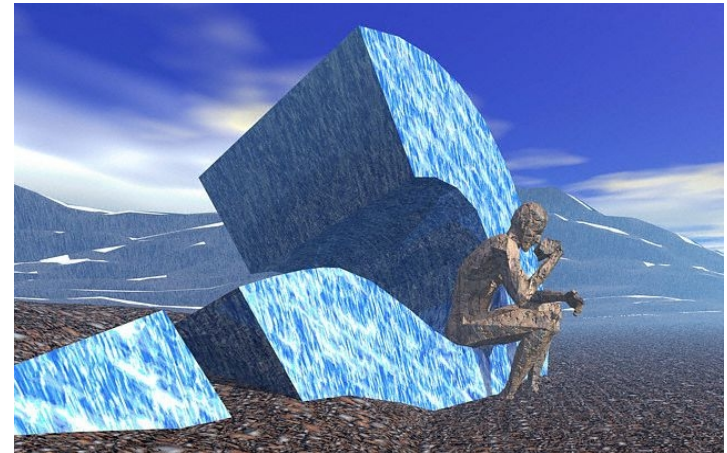
Modern teens are constantly re-evaluating and re-setting their worldview. Opinions are everywhere. Their parents say one thing, their favorite singer another, Hollywood a third and their school something else. They have a peer group of somewhat like-minded people but they see other peer groups who think very

differently. Who is to decide? Not surprisingly, many post-modern youth question whether truth even exists.

Their own experience of life seems to validate this. “What I felt was right last week doesn't feel so right this week. Things have changed.”

Christian Smith, the author of the book, *Souls in Transition*, examines the views of emerging adults and notes, when the interviewers asked emerging adults to discuss whether their own key moral beliefs were based in anything objective or were simply human inventions, most emerging adults *could not understand* the issue. They had difficulty in even seeing that objective standards could possibly exist.

You might think this would mean making moral decisions would be tough for post-modern youth. Exactly the opposite is the case. Right and wrong are easy. You just go with your gut feeling at that time. Decide everything on a case-by-case basis.



If later you come to feel your decision didn't work out so well, that doesn't make it wrong. You did what you felt was right at the time. You followed your moral instinct, thus you were right.

But what if it went really bad? Here you need a second moral principle, which is: “have no regrets.” Just move on. Take life as it comes.

Christian youth (and adults) are not unaffected. Most of them believe objective truth exists and seek to follow it, but must live in a world that puts unrelenting pressure on them to act otherwise and never “impose” their beliefs on anyone else.

Post-modernism cannot tolerate anchoring morality in any lasting principles or even in time.

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