

## The African-American Teenager's Guide To Personal Growth, Health, Safety, Sex and Survival: Living and Learning in the 21st Century

**Debrah Harris-Johnson**

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Is society helping to prepare young adults for adulthood? The parent of two children and speaker for youth and volunteer organizations, Harris-Johnson has made sure that she has contributed to the welfare of African-American young people by preparing a guide for teens that offers suggestions on how to succeed when confronted with life's challenges. Included in the book are discussions about personal growth, peer pressure, family problems, sex, and health.

Under personal growth the author guides the individual in discovering his or her self and identifying positive and negative personality traits. She provides examples on how positive traits can be, for example, an advantage in coping with the death of a friend or loved one. In this section she discusses the grieving process noting three stages: numbness, the bad dream aspect; disorganization, the loss of sleep and appetite, weeping and fatigue; and reorganization, caring about one's self again and a prevailing calmness. The author doesn't use psychological terms, but conversational parent to child language facilitating better understanding.

The health of African-American teens is discussed. Personal hygiene, appearance, fitness, exercise, dieting as well as spiritual health are included. The important subject of staying away from negative influences such as alcohol and drugs is treated. Friendship and sex also are addressed. How to be a positive friend, dating, peer pressure and how to say No. Topics include birth control and homosexuality.

Ways to become a more responsible family member are suggested. Learn to be more accepting, for instance, of the home environment. Participate more in family events such as family outings or spring-cleaning. This section also discusses family structures, inappropriate actions, manners and communication.

The author offers countless miscellaneous tips and hints in the last section of the book concerning topics such as bad breath, pets, television, the telephone, sewing, money matters, foot odor, washing, ironing and self-defense.

Harris-Johnson also provides information for parents wishing to better help and understand their children.

**TAMIKA BARNES** (May / June 2000)

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