

# Growing Up Amish



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Nearly 90 percent of those who grow up Amish choose the Amish way: a lifetime commitment to the faith and a traditional way of life. To outsiders immersed in the daily realities and luxuries of the modern world, this statistic may seem unbelievable. In this in-depth study of Amish adolescence, Richard A. Stevick offers a balanced, comprehensive, and engaging account of the social forces and rituals-including Rumspringa-that contribute to this statistic. In *Growing Up Amish*, Stevick reveals the world of Amish youth caught between the expectations of their traditional community and the growing pressures and temptations that accompany adolescence. Drawing from a dozen years of research in more than seventy communities in fifteen states, he carefully details home life and school, social singings and wild parties, isolated settlements and Amish youth gangs, and courtship practices and wedding rituals. Stevick shows how the strong and distinct Amish identity is fostered by the entire community-parents, ministers, teachers, and neighbors. With positive reinforcement and constant modeling of Amish behavior and values, this strong identity keeps most youth from feeling at ease in and identifying with the outside world. This definitive work provides new and important insight into what life is really like for the adolescents, their families, and their communities during the "running around" years and how these fascinating rituals have, in fact, helped the Amish preserve their unique culture.

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