

freely if they wished. "There's nothing I couldn't tell my mum," insists 17-year-old model Lily Donaldson, who is fresh from opening and closing the Chanel show in Paris.

Body image can be a problem with teens, too. When I was their age, my fears were largely physical – I was too big, too womanly, too much the one that stuck out like a sore thumb. I was by no means alone. By the time I left boarding school at least half my friends were suffering from various degrees of eating disorders. Recent statistics state that more than half teenage girls are, or think they should be, on diets. Yes, these girls worry about their looks but, at the same time, they seem to enjoy them. To a large degree, they seem baffled by their friends who really hate the way they look, but this could be – and I expect is – bravado. Then again, these are the lucky ones whose hormones haven't bloated their tiny bodies.

The one thing, however, that worries them across the board, is surprising: they worry about their future. Not in an emotional sense, but in a professional one. They worry hugely about their school grades, their career choices and whether or not their schools are right for them. "I wish I knew what I was going to be," says Lily Donaldson, who recently left school without completing her A-levels because she had hit her modelling moment. "I love modelling but I do worry about what I will do when I'm too old, with no qualifications." "There is a horrendous pressure on young people these days," says Paula Hall. "It's not good enough to pass. You need to pass with flying colours." For evidence of this, we need look no further than the fact that the majority of secondary schools now have in-house counsellors. And GCSEs are only the beginning. To have any hope of getting a well-paid job, teenagers today need at least three good A-levels to get them into university, which gets them the degree, which gets them the foot in the professional door. "They have too much choice," says Hall. "It might seem like a blessing, but in many ways it's a curse."

Far from being a time to establish their identity, it seems that a person's teenage years are being taken up with all-too-adult anxieties. This, more than anything, might go some way towards explaining the fact that last year 146,000 teenagers in the UK were prescribed antidepressants – over triple the number of five years previously. A parent of one such teenager described the state of her 14-year-old daughter's mind to me as "a huge, bubbling pressure-cooker. When I was a teenager," she remembers, "I worried about silly things. But my daughter seems to have such terrifyingly adult concerns, even though she is still essentially a little girl." With a sense of community eluding the disparate majority, teenagers today have fewer role models than at any time in history. Not only that, but growing up lasts even longer as the high cost of living prolongs dependency on parents. "I am having fun now while I can," says 16-year-old Heathfield student Rose Langley. "Because I know that life gets more and more tricky the older you get."

Location: Albion Riverside, Hester Rd, c/o Hutchinson Whampoa (020 7223 1881). Interior Design: David Collins (020 7349 5900)



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Matilda Sturridge and Tallulah Ormsby-Gore, above

Matilda Sturridge, left, 16, the daughter of actor Charles Sturridge and actress Phoebe Nicholls, has wanted to be an actress for as long as she can remember. "It must have been all those film sets I visited as a child," she says. She is never happier than when watching her heroine, Marilyn Monroe, whisper her way through *Some Like It Hot*, or spending time with her "incredibly close" family. Tallulah Ormsby-Gore is the daughter of Amanda Harlech, Karl Lagerfeld's right-hand woman. Now 16, she rarely gets her hands on her mother's enviable wardrobe. She might not have her clothes, but she has her mother's feline eyes, her intelligent charm and her innate sense of style.

All pages – hair: Kerry Warn for John Frieda Salon. Make-up: Florrie White