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Balancing Work, Parenting,
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New Media

How Teens Get
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How to Be
a Teen Who
Doesn't Drink

Public Speaking

Why It's a
Skill for Life



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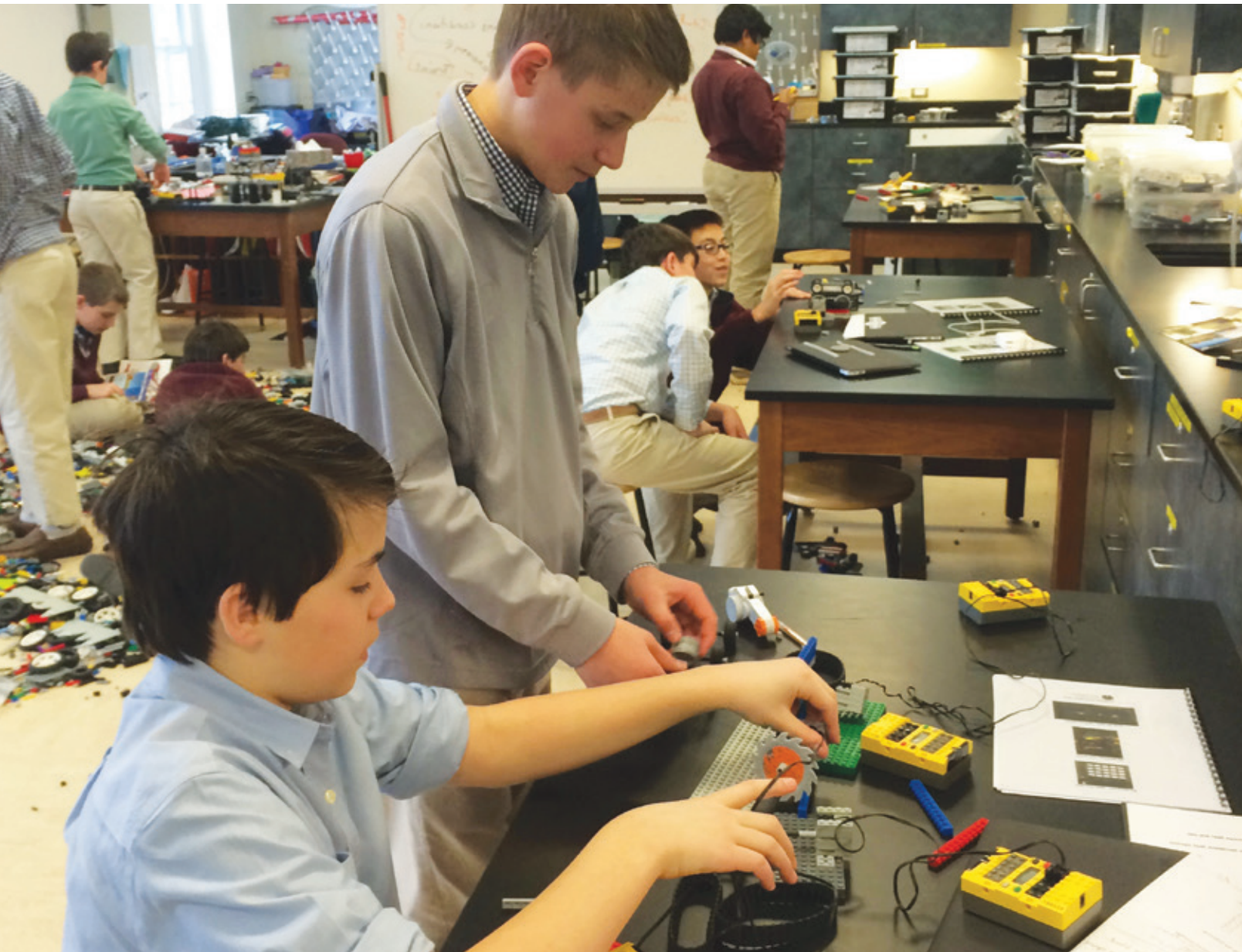


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Our blogger made some mistakes parenting her high school kids—but you don't have to.

bit.ly/high-school-mistakes



Middle School
Bullying: Mean Girls Made My Daughter Cry

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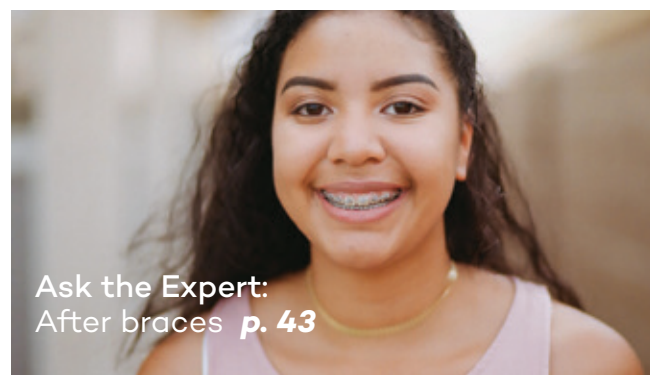


Photo: Stephen Bivens

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Cover photo by Beth Segal

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for parents



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Messy? Disorganized? I get it.

With five kids in Northeast Ohio, we own a lot of stuff. Winter coats, lightweight coats, raincoats, sandals, sneakers, boots, flip flops, sports shoes, sports equipment—plus everyday clothing for four seasons. Everything times five. That's a lot of opportunity for mess.

By necessity, I've tried to implement organizational systems. When all five kids lived in the house, I was overwhelmed with the volume of laundry. Sorting was a nightmare—no one ever got the right clothes back. So, I gave every child a laundry basket and taught them how to do laundry. Little by little, they figured out hacks, like piling weeks of dirty clothes into one overflowing load, or leaving their laundry in the laundry room for someone (me) to throw in with a small load.

But it wasn't just laundry. My kids would leave their shoes and coats by the front door or directly in front

of (no, not in) their built-in storage cubbies. Textbooks on the table. Homework wherever. Keys on my desk. And so on. After I'd had enough nagging, I would do a widespread sweep of everything into a laundry basket and put the basket in the storage room. The kids' solution was not to become neater, but to go to the storage room and collect what they needed.

My daughter came home from college two months ago and dumped all of her clothes on her floor. She says she has a system to keep track of dirty versus clean, but I don't believe her. The other day, she proudly called me in to show me that she had spent hours cleaning up the mess. From my perspective, there was nothing to brag about—and not much has changed.

To be frank, my children come by this honestly. My husband and I have successfully passed on the disorganization gene. The big difference is that we have a laundry

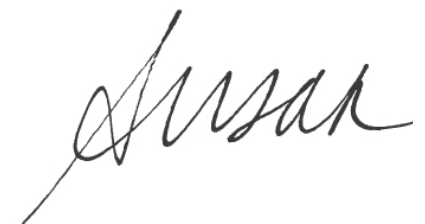
room with a door that secretly houses the mess. (Also, for better or worse, we live freely, without a parent nagging us to clean up.)

After reading the feature by Catherine Newman (on page 32), I'm going to try one more time. The Sunday basket is my first endeavor. Why don't you try something too? Let's keep each other posted on our successes (and failures).

This issue is packed with more than organization tips; as usual, the range and quality of our content astonishes me. It's what *Your Teen* brings to us every single time—in print and online. So many topics are issues we all confront. Like the Family Matters article (on page 28) about how we each have different memories of our shared experiences—my children always correct my version of a story, too. In their opinion, I always get some piece of retelling completely wrong. (As you can imagine, I am always grateful for their clarification.)

We've also got articles to help you keep your kid's expensive smile straight now and into the future, to help you address the distractions of technology, to start the year off with improved study habits—and so much more.

Enjoy the read.




My daughter's bedroom. Can you tell she cleaned it?

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



KJ DELL'ANTONIA

You may know KJ Dell'Antonia in her professional capacity as a writer for *The New York Times* and the editor of its former *Motherlode* parenting blog. We are delighted to share a small peek into her own family life—and reading life—with her and sixth-grade son Wyatt's book review of *One Mixed-Up Night* on page 25.



MAYIM BIALIK

Our generation may have first met her as the irrepressible teenage star of *Blossom*—but, like us, Mayim Bialik has grown up—she earned a Ph.D. in neuroscience and plays a neurobiologist on TV. Now Mayim has two children approaching their own teen years. We recently chatted by email, since Mayim is battling laryngitis. (How does she parent with no voice? Flip to page 20 to find out.)



R.J. PALACIO

If you have had a middle schooler in the past few years, they have probably read the bestseller *Wonder*, the moving 2012 novel about adolescence, feeling different, and what it means to be kind. As the November release date for the movie based on the book nears, we are pleased to share our interview with author R.J. Palacio. Read the conversation on page 56.



TORI CORDIANO, PH.D.

Who has a better memory, you or your teen? And how can you expect your teen to remember what you asked them to do—when you occasionally have embarrassing memory lapses of your own? We asked Dr. Tori Cordiano, a clinical psychologist and the assistant director of Laurel School's Center for Research on Girls, for advice when memories clash. You'll find it on page 28.

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We asked teens...

What embarrassing or annoying tech mistakes do your parents make?

This one time, a girl from my high school posted a picture of her baby niece on Facebook, and my dad accidentally shared the girl's photo. It was super-embarrassing because he doesn't know the family.

Christy, Gaithersburg, MD

Parents tagging you on Facebook in pictures you don't look good in.

Dana, Rocky River, OH

Watching them try to zoom in on a picture when that's definitely not possible.

Alex, Beachwood, OH

The way my parents speak to Siri on their Apple devices. They almost always wait too long and miss their chance to speak!

Madison, Shaker Heights, OH

The most embarrassing tech mistake my dad has made is when I showed him my Instagram feed and he didn't understand the concept of the "double-tap" method; he quickly liked a photo of a boy that I knew but had never talked to before in my life! So. Embarrassing.

Tara, Jericho, NY

My dad always references "tweets" as "twitters."

Emily, Great Neck, NY

They will type out a message but then never actually send it, and when they text they always spell things really weird because they hit more than one letter at a time.

Kristina, Potomac, MD

My dad replies to Facebook email notifications. So if he'll get an email saying John Adams commented on your picture he'll email Facebook back to thank them.

Shelby, Toronto, Ontario

My mom had my phone number off by one digit and kept texting the wrong person for two months. The person would respond saying it wasn't them, but my mom thought it was me joking and would reply, "Okay sure."

Jack, Alison Park, PA

My mom didn't know phones connected to Wi-Fi, so she just used her data everywhere, including at home, for, like, a year.

Marisa, Glenhead, NY

Showing them a funny picture or video that features a complete stranger and them asking, "Who is that? Do you know them?"

Gabby, Cleveland Heights, OH

#ParentHack

The Story of an Unplugged Family

Our family isn't tech-free, but we have raised our kids TV-free (a long-ago decision based more on a tiny studio apartment than a philosophical commitment to shun Elmo).

When the kids are plugged in to tech, and we're trying to connect with them—yet no one is in the mood for probing questions about life—our family turns to podcasts for a shared experience. We mostly use recommendations from friends and other teens. A college student we met on a recent bike trip turned us on to "Up and Vanished" (an investigative podcast about the unsolved disappearance of a Georgia beauty queen and high school teacher that is not for the faint of heart). More recently, the kids have had "listening" assignments from school. For example, Public Radio International's "The World in Words" came to us this way.

We mostly cue up shows for longer car rides. When we get in the groove of a great series, though, we'll try to squeeze in an episode even on a short trip.

Current events, business savvy, music, storytelling, crime-solving, humorous or serious, one-shot or serialized—when we find something good, it gives us a few hours of great content and lots of openings for discussions—and laughter, too.

Lisa Vahey is a consultant who lives with her husband and two high schoolers in Shaker Heights, Ohio, where she is also an active volunteer.



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- education
- engineering
- neuroscience
- physics

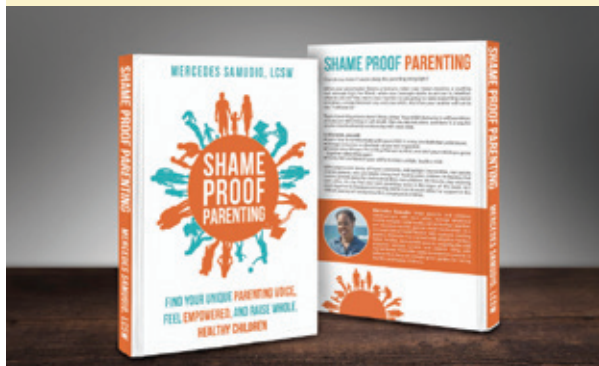
Those success stories are among the reasons Thiel College was recognized nationally as a **College of Distinction**.

As your family searches for the right college, be sure to experience what Thiel offers.



By the Numbers...

BOOK RECOMMENDATION



Shame-Proof Parenting by Mercedes Samudio

Shame-Proof Parenting is for the parent who had a less-than-storybook childhood and may still carry a sense of shame from it. It's for the parent who feels the tug of guilt at her parenting choices but may not know how to adjust her parenting style.

With a friendly, engaging tone, Mercedes Samudio, a licensed clinical social worker and parenting coach, acknowledges that parenting is challenging for everyone, but even more so for the parent who was raised through shame and humiliation. She shares anecdotes about her own dysfunctional childhood, along with sound professional wisdom and healthy, achievable goals.

This is not a book about how to become the perfect parent and raise the perfect kid. In fact, Samudio cautions that overcompensating for an imperfect childhood can do damage to the child as well as to the parent-child relationship. Samudio not only guides the reader in making better parenting choices through reflective parenting and self-awareness, but she also advocates for the self-care necessary to create space for our own authentic selves.

"Shame-proof parenting is not about getting it right," Samudio says. "Rather, it's about being comfortable in the fluidity of our humanness." —*Kristina Wright*



4,140

The total number of colleges and universities in the United States

STATISTIC BRAIN

66%

The percentage of teens who say they are more likely to use their cellphones to text their friends than to call them

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

\$324

The national average spent by American high school students in 2016 on a promposal (inviting a date to homecoming or prom)

VISA PROM SPENDING SURVEY



5.13

The average hours per day Americans spent in 2016 on sports and leisure

U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR

12.9%

The percentage of Americans who plan to dress up their pet for Halloween

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Your teen will love these back-to-school essentials

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ion8 Ultimate Water Bottle

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Kind Beyond Fruit Bites

Kids are sweet enough without all that extra added sugar. Try this first-ever fruit snack to contain only fruit. Even the most annoying snack mom at practice will approve because they are gluten-free, non-GMO, vegan, and dairy-free. \$4.99 per 5-pack, kindsnacks.com

Out of Print Wonder Tote

We love these bags and their anti-bullying message, too. Show your support with this pouch or tote, with proceeds benefiting Operation Smile. \$18, outofprintclothing.com



and for parents...



KRUPS Programmable Coffee-Maker

You're going to need coffee this school year, and lots of it. The Savoy has a dual auto-start function for a pre-set coffee wake-up call during the workweek and a later brew time for lazy Sundays. It also has a handy 1-4 cup function for small-batch brewing. \$79.99, krupsusa.com



Sansaire Sous Vide Machine

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Omega Mega Mouth Juicer

Getting more fruits and vegetables into your family is easy and fast with this continuous, pulp-ejection style juicer with an extra-large feed chute wide enough for an entire piece of fruit. \$149.95 omegajuicers.com



Puro Wireless Headphones

Yes, we're concerned about our kids getting hearing loss from loud music blowing out their eardrums. Protect them with these studio-quality Bluetooth capable headphones with noise-limiting capability, superior sound, and a top recommendation by *The New York Times*. \$100, purosound.com



Nook Pebble Lounger

Your *Teen* editor Sharon's kids fight over who gets to sit in this. This ergonomic, comfortable kids' chair comes with a travel bag, and the cover is machine-washable. Don't you want one in your house? \$220, nooksleep.com

Bed Head TIGI Line up Hair Straightener

We had to suffer with frizzy hair, but at least our teens can have beautiful, smooth, straight hair. Perfect to stash in a backpack or purse for quick touchups. \$19, bedheadstyling.com



Keep that summer feeling all year round with these sunny items



OluKai Hawaiian Inspired Pehuea Shoes

Those darn kids always trash the backs of their shoes, but the back of these awesome shoes can be worn up or down for easy on and off. All-day carefree style, arch support, and scuff-free soles. \$80, olukai.com



Pinky Perfect Canvas Bag

The perfect zippered pouch for girls of all ages who dream of being at the beach year-round. And it's so dang Instagrammable. \$18, pinkyperfect.com



Life Is Good Sleep Pants

Lounge in comfort and style with the softest, comfiest pants you will ever feel. The happy flip-flop design will remind you of summer—and they're so much cuter than your ratty old sweats. \$38, lifeisgood.com



The Buzz on Caffeine

Does your teen regularly head to class with a latte in hand or “rehydrate” after sports practice with an energy drink? We’re guessing yes, since teen caffeine use has more than doubled since 1980. But that’s a mistake, says Dr. Candice Dye, a pediatrician at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

While there’s no right age to start drinking caffeine, the longer you can wait, the better, she says. Because there are currently no guidelines on caffeine for teens, aside from “as little as possible,” Dye suggests teens adhere to limits similar to those for pregnant women—under 200 milligrams per day. (For reference, an average diet cola has about 40 to 70 milligrams in a 12-ounce can, while some energy drinks can pack a 250-milligram buzz in a single can.) Don’t forget all the potential sources of caffeine in your child’s diet, including chocolate, because they add up.

Of course, coffee houses are often a teen hangout, so suggest your child enjoy the lowest-caffeine beverage available—like a chai tea. Kids often love to look things up online, so have them check out nutritional information on the store’s app or website. And, if they plan to linger, suggest they intersperse caffeinated beverages with water rather than taking advantage of too many free refills.

“The goal is a nutritious, well-balanced diet, and caffeine contributes nothing to that,” says Dye. “The best advice is to avoid making it part of your daily routine.”

—Cathie Ericson



PUBLIC SPEAKING: Why It's a Skill for Life

Laurie Lande's twin sons joined their middle school debate team as sixth graders, and they're still going strong as rising juniors at Beverly Hills High School in California.

"I saw the value of debate when it comes to applying for colleges, so I encouraged them to try it—and, to my pleasant surprise, they liked it," shares Lande, who works as a private college counselor. "The first year, they didn't win a single debate, but by the time they finished middle school, they had gone to the state qualifier."

Now her sons can confidently debate current topics like the Glass-Steagall Act, a Great Depression-era

banking regulation that Congress has recently considered reinstating, and changes in minimum wage laws. They're also much more well-spoken in everyday life. "The best benefit has been that my kids almost never use filler words like 'um' or 'like,'" says Lande. "Debate teaches you to really think about every word."

Erasing bad habits (such as the dreaded use of "like") is a primary focus for New York-based public speaking coach Larry Gleason, who works with young adults on everything from how to stop fidgeting to increasing attention span for better focus. Instead of focusing on the negative, such as a

soft voice or a tendency to slouch, Gleason suggests parents "frame what they are trying to reinforce with a positive vibe: 'You look more powerful when you stand tall' [or] 'You've got a great voice that should be heard.'"

Whether it's homework or debate prep, "parents can also encourage home practice and give their teen space," Gleason says. "Teens can feel self-conscious working on speeches and presentations with parents and older siblings hovering nearby. Give them a room, close the door, and don't hover."

—Jen Jones Donatelli

NEW MEDIA: HOW TEENS GET THEIR NEWS

Why parents need to talk to their kids about what they read in the media

By Joanna Nesbit



My daughter has been a newshound since middle school, with a preference for *The New York Times* and *The Atlantic*. Her teen brother, on the other hand, says “I see the news,” but he can’t specifically say where he learns about current events. Aside from occasionally listening to and discussing National Public Radio stories with me, he gravitates to YouTube and Instagram when it’s up to him.

He’s not alone in choosing to skip traditional news. According to a recent survey by Common Sense Media, 66 percent of kids ages 10-18 trusted their parents as a news source more than any other. Yet, when asked their preferred news source, their most popular answer is social media, with family and traditional media lagging behind.

Are teenagers reading reliable content? As it turns out, our kids are not exactly sure. Seventy percent of students say consuming the news makes them feel smart and knowledgeable, even though 44 percent say they have trouble distinguishing real news from fake news.

A 2016 Stanford study turned up similar results regarding media literacy. Middle schoolers couldn’t spot the difference between news and advertiser content and didn’t know why paid-for content would have a bias.

Media literacy educator Belinha De Abreu, who teaches research skills and how to evaluate information, also questions teens’ ability to spot true news when they come across it in their social media feeds. With today’s talking heads constantly analyzing 24/7 news cycles, kids have a hard time distinguishing opinion from fact. “Teens don’t have a good way of filtering information because there’s too much coming at them,” she says.

Experts agree that parents play a primary role in helping kids understand what’s accurate. According to Common Sense Media, kids need adults to effectively model how to consume news and think critically about sources. Give your children the opportunity to discuss different points of view and assess media biases. Try picking a current event with your teen, and read about the same topic on two or more news outlets to compare how facts are presented. Then discuss how bias, opinion, or even desire to mislead can affect what they read on the page—or, more likely, online.

Ultimately, kids need our help evaluating and digesting the news, and they trust us to provide that guidance. That may be more than my teenage son is willing to admit, but it looks like more mother-son news dates may be in our future. ■

The Emotional Toll

A majority of teens admit to feeling depressed, scared, or angered by the news, according to the Common Sense Media survey. New Jersey psychologist Eileen Kennedy-Moore, creator of the audio-video series *Raising Emotionally and Socially Healthy Kids*, says that because teens inevitably see news on social media platforms, we need to check in with them. Ask what they’ve heard, particularly after a big event, both to correct misinformation and to acknowledge possible overwhelm or worry without minimizing or dismissing concerns.

Teens may seem to be media-savvy, but they need adult help with context and content. “Our role as parents is to interpret for our kids what’s going on,” Kennedy-Moore says. “They look to us not just as a source of facts but also as a guide for how to respond to an event.”

For example, with the recent focus in the news on healthcare, it might be helpful to tell your teens you’ll ensure they get the medical care they need if family health insurance changes. Kids can sometimes worry in ways we don’t anticipate.

Check in. See what they’re thinking and worrying about. That’s always good advice for parents of teens, and the news is one more reason to keep the family conversation going.

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SAY – Social Advocates for Youth is a school-based prevention and early intervention program of Bellefaire JCB for students in middle and high school. SAY services are offered in eight east suburban school districts in Cuyahoga County: **Beachwood, Chagrin Falls, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Mayfield, Orange, Shaker Heights, Solon and South Euclid-Lyndhurst.**

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TEACHING TEENS TO MASTER THAT CARD

Of all the financial skills parents must teach, the appropriate use of a credit card is among the most important. It's just too easy to get into trouble with plastic when you're not familiar with how it works. But because teenagers can't get their own credit card until they're at least 18 years old, it can be tricky to teach them how to responsibly use credit in a hands-on way. Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. Start talking about credit.

If you haven't explained how credit cards work, now's the time. The most important point to stress: It's not free money, but rather a convenient way to pay. Emphasize that it's best to treat a credit card like cash: Don't buy what you can't afford to pay for each month.

2. Explain how interest works.

When you pay with a credit card, you are borrowing money, and if you don't pay your balance when it's due, you'll be charged interest (a lot of interest, in fact). Chances are, your teenager has no understanding of how interest works, so you'll need to explain

it. You can also use an online calculator (bit.ly/YT-credit) to demonstrate what it means to pay interest on a credit card debt.

3. Review statements.

Your own statements can serve as a learning tool here. Talk about what each section means. Explain the consequences of late or missed payments, which, in addition to interest, include fees and a hit to your credit rating. Also point out the "minimum payment due," and explain why this is not what you should pay, but rather the least amount you can pay and keep the card active.

4. Discuss a "credit limit" versus an actual budget.

Credit limits are confusing, especially for teenagers. Stress that just because

the credit limit is, say, \$5,000, that doesn't mean you should spend \$5,000. In general, teenagers who learn to budget will be better equipped to use credit responsibly than those who don't.

5. Make your teenager an authorized user.

You can add your teenager as an authorized user on your own card around age 14 (depending on the card issuer). If you decide to take this step, set strict limits for how your teenager can use the card, and be sure to review your child's spending each month. A great way to drive home the importance of sticking to a budget: Require your teenager to reimburse you for his credit-card purchases each month, and charge him interest if he can't.—D.S.

ENCHILADAS SUIZAS

Serves 2-4

INGREDIENTS:

8 corn tortillas
 3 cups shredded chicken
 2 cups shredded Mexican cheese (queso Oaxaca or mozzarella)
 Lettuce

Enchilada sauce:

2 poblano peppers
 2 serrano peppers, stemmed and seeded to taste
 1 ½ lbs. of tomatillos, husks removed and rinsed well
 1 cup of fresh cilantro, rough chopped
 5 cloves of garlic
 1 tsp cumin
 1 ½ cups of sour cream
 ¼ cup vegetable oil
 Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. For the enchilada sauce, preheat broiler to high.
2. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and arrange the poblanos, serranos, and tomatillos on the baking sheet.
3. Place the sheet within 6 inches of the broiler, and broil until browned, flipping halfway through (tomatillos will require less time, about 7 minutes, and peppers about 15 minutes).
4. When everything is charred and blistered, transfer to a gallon-sized plastic bag. Seal until cooled, allowing everything to steam (This makes it easier to skin the peppers).
5. When the peppers are cool enough to handle, peel skins and remove seeds from the poblanos, and seed the serrano peppers to taste (they are very hot, so seed cautiously).
6. Place roasted poblano peppers, tomatillos, garlic, cumin, sour cream, and fresh

cilantro in a blender, and blend until smooth. Place the oil in a pan, bring it to a medium-high heat, and add the sauce. Cook for few minutes, and let it simmer; adjust with salt and pepper to taste.

To assemble and bake:

1. Heat tortillas briefly in the microwave to soften (about 15 seconds), or fry until soft in oil.
2. Mix ½ cup of enchilada sauce with the chicken, and combine well.
3. Spoon the chicken mixture over each tortilla, and then roll up each one.
4. Cover the bottom of a 9 x 13 baking dish with a thin layer of enchilada sauce. Place the enchiladas side by side in a single layer, and top with shredded cheese.
5. Reserve the remaining enchilada sauce for serving.
6. Bake the enchiladas for 25 minutes, or until cheese melts. Serve with shredded lettuce for a crisp bite to go along with the meal.



Cheesy Enchiladas Are Always A Hit

Mexican food is always a popular dinner in a house full of teens. With fresh ingredients and mouth-watering aromas, this recipe is sure to be a crowd-pleaser. Chef Martin Lopez has created an array of multicultural dishes with European undertones that he calls “Mexican Novelle.” He shares his recipes and passion for cooking at *ChefMartin.net* and has appeared on Univision, CBS, Fox, and ABC.

Chef Martin says, “As a kid walking the streets of Mexico City, I remember the aromas of all the food from around the many establishments. One place that brings me many amazing memories is Sanborn’s. This upscale café and retail chain offers authentic Mexican food, and this cheesy, creamy dish originated there in 1950. Now, Enchiladas Suizas are known around the world.”



Q & A
...with Mayim Bialik

Our generation may have first met her as the irrepressible teenage star of the 1990s sitcom *Blossom*—but Mayim Bialik has grown up, moved on to new careers and jobs (including starring in *The Big Bang Theory*), and is a parent to children approaching their own teen years. We recently chatted by email because Mayim was battling laryngitis. (*How does she parent with no voice? Keep reading.*)

“Your strength is in knowing about your body, your brain, and your potential—you're the best person to be in charge of you!”

I heard you speak about attachment parenting when your children were younger—what does that look like as your boys get older?

Well, since birth and breastfeeding and baby-wearing are not issues anymore, one of the most important parts of attachment parenting remains super important, and that's called gentle discipline. It's based on the idea that children—and adults!—are always trying to get their needs met, and violence, anger, and punishments don't actually work; they just make kids afraid.

Like most of us with tweens, are your kids embarrassed by you?

From the second I open my eyes, they say I am doing something wrong! They say I sing too loud, walk funny, park weird, shop strange—you name it, and I can't do it right by them!

Do your kids know you are famous?

They are starting to get it more this past year. They know I am stopped for pictures and autographs and that people stare at me, but they have only seen a few episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* when they have come to set to see a few run-throughs.

You just released a book for girls called *Girling Up: How to Be Strong, Smart, and Spectacular*. If girls get one take-away, what do you hope it is?

Your strength is in knowing about your body, your brain, and your potential—you're the best person to be in charge of you!

Should parents encourage boys to read this book to learn about girls? Or should they read a different book specifically for boys?

Boys can absolutely learn a lot from this book; the chapters on biology and nutrition and learning are gender-neutral for the most part. But, yes—there should be a book for boys—stay tuned.

How can parents empower strong, smart girls while they also prepare them for the realities of life and a society that might label such qualities as "bossy"?

Be realistic with them that not everyone will always like everything they do and say. And they may go against the grain, and it may not suit everyone. But that's okay! Young women who stand up for themselves ultimately are going to do well as adults!

You sometimes speak out about mental illness. Do you have suggestions for how parents can help destigmatize mental illness?

Pointing out and learning about mental health is a great start. Stopping the use of "crazy" and "psycho" in teenage vernacular is important, and it's something I make my boys be specific about. If they say someone was acting "crazy," I tell them to describe behaviors and not use terms like that, which can mean so many things.

We also focus a lot on differences in all of us and how those with mental illness have different challenges but sometimes unique talents, too.

You have laryngitis and have been unable to speak for a few weeks.

We've got to know: How are you parenting without a voice?

Haha not so well! I use a whiteboard. And my boys don't appreciate it very much. My "stern looks" have gotten a lot more exercise for sure, as has our Netflix account. ■

Interview by Susan Borison



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TAKE IT OUTSIDE!

Remember what your mother would say when you and your siblings were dusting it up in her living room? Turns out, there's good science to back her up.

By Jennifer Proe



When Tom Morley's kids, 14, 12, and 7, are sulking or bickering, he pulls out the oldest trick in the book: He hustles them outside to walk the dog. Within moments, the mood lightens and the tension dissipates. Magic? Or science?

Morley, an entrepreneur who serves as a board member at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, became more intentional about introducing nature into the family dynamic when he noticed the positive changes that occurred after spending time in the great outdoors.

"It's a visible change," says Morley. "I see more cooperation, less tension, and the volume on everything just gets turned down a little," he says. The more he read up on the topic, the more convinced he became that this connection to nature was key.

As it turns out, he was on to something. "We are physically wired to respond to being outdoors," says Deborah Gilboa, M.D., a Pittsburgh area physician and parenting expert. "It causes us to take slower, deeper breaths and to take more in visually. We are much more likely to look up and look around when we are outside."

The result can be a significant reduction in stress and anxiety, making this a great addition to the list of positive coping strategies Gilboa thinks all teens should have in their arsenal. "It's important for teens to know that this is a self-

regulation technique they can employ on their own," she says.

But how to lure teens away from their screens and into the natural world? Morley has a few suggestions.

"I share with my kids what I have learned about the scientific benefits of being in nature so that it's not just 'Because I said so,' or 'Because I'm the parent.' The biggest lesson I learned is that I need to meet them where they are and find common activities we all like to do together, like camping," says Morley.

To get the benefits of nature therapy, however, you don't have to mount a camping expedition. Taking advantage of nearby nature in and around your neighborhood can do the trick, whether it's a hike in the local nature preserve or a walk around the block.

"Nature is everywhere," says Harvey Webster, director of wildlife resources at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. "I always remind kids that if they want to see something cool, they have to do something really profound: Just go outside and look up."

For teens (and parents) who are used to looking down at their phones, this can take a little re-training, but it might just pay off with the sighting of a bird's nest or a red-tailed hawk.

"As a lifelong nature educator, I'm really concerned about people having a rudimentary understanding of science," says Webster. "We want people to be con-

nected with their world, and not to be afraid of nature but to respect it." But during his 40-plus years at the Museum, Webster has seen a decline in the amount of time youngsters spend in nature.

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network, even coined a phrase for this trend: "Nature Deficit Disorder." Luckily, the cure Louv prescribes is simple and costs nothing: a little "Vitamin N."

Even if you can only entice your teen as far as the backyard, with phone still in hand, there are benefits to be had. "If teens are experiencing conflict or feeling overwhelmed, just spending some time sitting on the porch can help to relax them," says Gilboa.

As teens get back into the school schedule—with all the stress that comes with it—you may find a little nature therapy is just what the doctor ordered. ■

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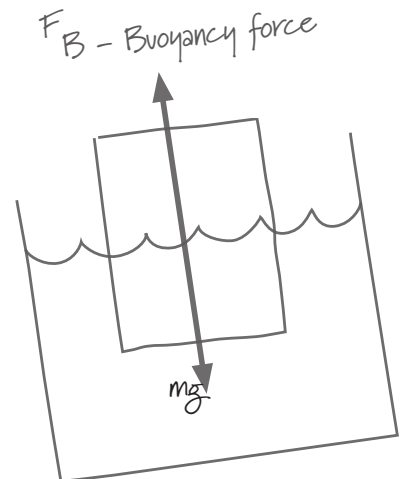
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One Mixed-Up Night

In Catherine Newman's middle-grade novel, two friends embark on the ultimate sleepover.

TEEN REVIEW

By **Wyatt Seelig**

One Mixed-Up Night is a book about kids who do something really risky. Walter and Frankie weren't exactly running away. They told their parents they'd be at each other's houses, but they weren't. Instead, they spent the night in an Ikea store for Walter's birthday. It's a night that makes their friendship stronger, and helps Walter through a tough time.

The book starts at what's basically the middle of the story. Frankie and Walter are in the Ikea, hiding from the security guard, and you just have to know how they got there. Frankie tells you the story, and you go back and find out everything that led up to that point, and then things really start to happen.

I had never read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, which *One Mixed-Up Night* is kind of based on, but it didn't matter. I haven't ever been in an Ikea store, either—but everything they said about the book and the store made me curious. I wondered how they would manage to stay in a store after it closed, and what they'd do once they were in it and it was dark.

Having Frankie and Walter talk about a store and another book made the whole thing seem more real. It almost felt like watching a movie; there was so much detail. And as you read, everything sort of piles up into a big commotion, and it just gets more and more chaotic. It's so much fun, except you know it's building toward the end of the book, and I didn't want this book to end.

One Mixed-Up Night would be a good book for people who love to read, and for picky readers, too. It's exciting and it keeps you turning the pages to see what will happen next, which is fun even if you're not someone who normally spends a lot of time reading. It's also a book that works for a lot of ages and different kinds of readers, because it's got good characters and a lot of action, but it's not scary or sad. I loved it. I can't wait to see what Catherine Newman writes next.

Wyatt Seelig is a sixth grader who attends Crossroads Academy in Lyme, New Hampshire. His favorite book is Ready Player One, but One Mixed-Up Night is a close second.

PARENT REVIEW

By **KJ Dell'Antonia**

I have read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. I've also been to an Ikea—oh yeah, I've eaten the meatballs. And, disclosure: Catherine Newman, who wrote *One Mixed-Up Night*, is a friend of mine. But if my son hadn't loved this book, I wouldn't have read it—and if I hadn't loved it too, I wouldn't be writing about it. I would have maintained a discreet silence. But still, it's only fair that you know that I know her.

That first paragraph—casual, slangy, written as though we know one another—is exactly how the story in *One Mixed-Up Night* is told, and it's a voice that grabs the reader and doesn't let go. From the first declaration (“People think that dorky geeks who read all the time are the kinds of kids who don't get into trouble. But they're wrong. We do.”), right into the surprising starter twist (they wouldn't even be in that kind of trouble if it weren't for the books they read), Frankie is a narrator who keeps the reader listening, and like the best storytellers, she saves up the most important stuff for last.

One Mixed-Up Night is a book that moves fast, with a straightforward, engaging story and a lot of heart (there's a tragedy at the bottom of exactly why Frankie and her best friend, Walter, come up with their crazy Ikea dream and actually make it happen). It's in the style of the kinds of children's books many of us grew up on, like *Harriet the Spy* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, written by someone who clearly hasn't forgotten what it's like to be a kid, aware of the adult world and also aware that it's a good place to be on the edges of while you still can.

Younger teens, especially, will love putting themselves in Frankie and Walter's shoes, while slightly older teens will see it as a fun break from the heavier fare that tends to fill the Young Adult shelves. And while a kid doesn't have to have read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* to enjoy *One Mixed-Up Night*, reading the latter might inspire an interest in the former. My son's already put in a request.

KJ Dell'Antonia is a regular contributor to The New York Times and the former editor of its Motherlode blog.



Should We Encourage Quality Over Quantity?

By Cathie Ericson

Little kids are hoarders: Whether it's fast food toys, action figures, rocks, or all the above, more is always better at that age. But as kids become teens, it's time to teach them when to choose quality over quantity. Here are some tips.

START A CONVERSATION

As Seattle mom Rhonda McRae was helping her 15-year-old son, Kyle, clean his room, she noticed him staring at his Pokémon cards. "As he was clearing them out, he remarked that he'd spent a small fortune on them, so I hope that will stick in his mind when he's looking to buy something now."

Even if your teen isn't mentally adding up those wasted dollars, you can help them get on the right track. Ask questions about their choices and preferences, and help them think through what became of certain purchases, or how they felt when a cheap product immediately broke, suggests Weena Cullins, a Licensed Clinical Marriage and Family Therapist in Largo, Maryland.

But be careful of being judgmental, which will just make teens tune you out, warns Maggie Baker, a psychologist, financial therapist and author of *Crazy About Money: How Emotions Confuse Our Money Choices And What To Do About It*. "Teens want control, so just help them see what they might do differently next time."

HELP THEM DO THE RESEARCH

Teens love to reach their own conclusions, so give them the tools to be discerning consumers by showing them how to find reviews from reputable, unbiased sources.

"Assist your child with price and quality comparisons on several purchases by having a casual discussion about what factors might make a certain product cost more than a similar one," Cullins advises.

And introduce your teen to the concept of cost per use: Sometimes spending more is better, if it's something they'll use all the time, like a bike, versus a unicycle that you're pretty sure is a passing fancy.

You might also help kids think through the environmental consequences of too much stuff, suggests Baker. If your teen is into "fast fashion" and grabs cheap clothing every time they hit the mall, suggest some research on the effect these products have. Teens might be tempted to consume less when they consider sustainability. But avoid heavy-handed preaching, Baker reminds parents.

IS IT EVER BETTER TO GO CHEAP?

While we don't want our kids to fill their rooms with a bunch of junk, there's also a danger that they might learn to expect only the best if their parents are slaves to expensive brand names.

"If teens are forgetful or especially hard on things, don't invest too much in products that may get lost or broken before they can get a return on the investment," Cullins advises.

And, she adds, don't expect a teen to take better care of something just because it cost more. "High price tags don't necessarily make kids more responsible, but they do make parents more frustrated if something is lost or broken."

For some items, less can be more. When my own son lost his second pair of high-priced sunglasses, I half-jokingly told him that's why we moms don't buy expensive sunglasses: We've lost so many pairs over the years that we know better.

Sometimes they learn lessons the (really) hard way about when to invest, as mom Jenelle Clinton found with her daughter's iPhone case, ordered for a mere \$6 from China. "Literally within an hour, she dropped her phone and the screen shattered. She learned that with some things, cute just isn't enough."



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How We Remember

That's Not What Happened!



Memory is a hot topic in my family, always leading to heated debates.

I'm convinced that I have a better memory than my mom. She will mistakenly say something, and when I correct her, she tells me that I'm misremembering.

Once, when I was seven, she told me that Jesus died in 2008. But she denies ever having said this.

My parents also seem to think I forget the things they've asked me to do. I promise I hear my parents, but when they remind me to do something, I already know what they're about to say because I was just getting around to doing it. (Okay, I may just not want to do it. Or I may have forgotten. Maybe I'm giving myself too much credit here.)

When it comes to memories of events, though, I'm sure my memory is more accurate. When I was five, my family collected the mail for an across-the-street neighbor. My father wanted to teach me how to cross the street when I was not at a crosswalk. (Or he was just being lazy about walking to the corner. The mystery remains.)

I safely crossed and gave the mail to the neighbor. On my way back, my father stood across the street, telling me when it was safe to cross. "Go, go, go!" he screamed (as I remember). He now remembers screaming, "No, no, no." The car sped and ran over my foot.

Eight years later, the debate about those three words continues.

Aidan Kohn-Murphy, 13, is an 8th grader at Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C. A former SI for Kids reporter, Aidan loves writing and sports. When not focusing on either, he can be found listening to eighties music, reading, and following politics.



With great trepidation, I have to admit that Aidan might have a better memory than I do. Is it because mine is filled with the endless self-replenishing to-do lists that come with parenting two boys? Is it because of all the sleep I lose trying to deplete

those to-do lists? Is it because I'm pushing 45? Or, as Aidan would remind me, actually more like 50?

Whatever the reason, I'm afraid he has surpassed me in his ability to store and access facts about history (details about the Haitian Revolution), sports trivia (the names of every pitcher in the MLB), and media minutia (he can recite verbatim episodes of *30 Rock*). I can rarely go toe-to-toe with him on any trivia.

Though I am confident I didn't tell him that Jesus died in 2008, he has certainly more than once correctly observed lapses in my memory about punishments I gave to his brother and then forgot to enforce. However, I will note that Aidan is mysteriously less attentive in pointing out his own forgotten punishments—like when I forget that he has lost his iPhone privileges for the day.

Despite his strong memory, there are two areas in which I wish he would recognize my competence—and perhaps only his developing competence. First, that aforementioned to-do list? The action items that I am certain I have delegated to him somehow slip his otherwise ironclad mind. Second, I do happen to know a thing or two that he still hasn't learned and might be interested in. It might be even more exciting to hear it from me than to read it on Wikipedia.

Laurie Kohn is a law professor at George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C., where she teaches and practices family and domestic violence law. In addition to being a journalist mom to Aidan, she is a baseball mom to 10-year-old Caleb.

MEMORY: ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT

Most parents can empathize with Laurie about these kinds of occasional memory lapses—and with their never-ending to-do lists, who could possibly blame them?

While teens may have a leg up on remembering factual information and vivid details of their earlier childhoods—though we'll never know for sure about what Aidan's dad yelled out that day—parents do have something to offer that teens can't yet match. Parents bring to the table a wealth of life experiences—some that occurred before they even had children.

But how is a parent to share this valuable information—the wisdom that comes with a lifetime of accumulated memories—with a teen who may be reluctant to listen? It helps to remember that teens (and most adults) will shut down at the first whiff of a lecture. But the casual sharing of memories, such as, “Yep, I remember noticing that when I studied abroad,” or “One of the things I loved most about high school was...” may open the door to a rich conversation without the pretext of your teen getting something out of it.

And those to-do list items that always seem to be forgotten? It might help to get creative with how they're communicated—would your teen prefer a text or a calendar reminder rather than constant verbal instructions? And a light “I know you remember about that pile of laundry—what's your plan for getting it done before practice tonight?” gives teens credit for remembering the item and a gentle nudge to get it done—on the rare chance they did forget.

Dr. Tori Cordiano is a clinical psychologist in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and the assistant director of Laurel School's Center for Research on Girls.



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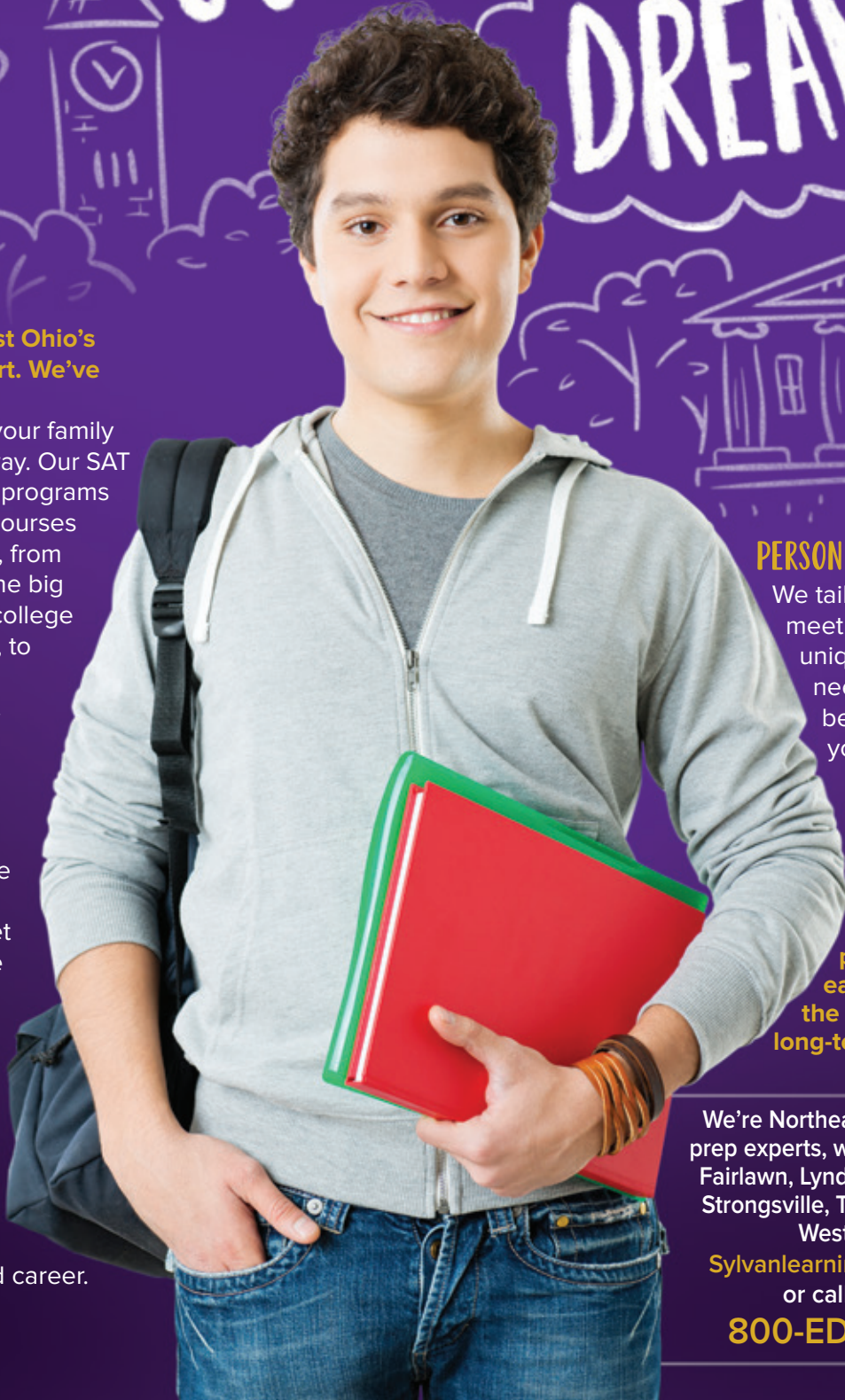
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STUDY HABITS: Starting Off on the Right Foot

By Jennifer Proe



Parents of teenagers will surely recognize this familiar scene: Child comes home from school. Child dumps backpack at door. Child plops on couch with electronic device and snack. You know they've had a busy day at school and need some downtime, but when should the downtime end and the studying begin?

It's a tricky path to negotiate, but the beginning of the school year is the time to help your teen establish a good study routine that will serve them well throughout the year.

"It's much easier for students to get off on the right foot at the beginning of the year than to try to correct things later," says Emily Levitt, vice president of education at Sylvan Learning, which offers a general studies skills course in addition to subject-specific tutoring.

Based on her experience with helping teens develop good study habits, Levitt offers these tips:

- **Schedule the homework time.** The time can fluctuate depending on sports and extracurricular activities, but the more consistent you can be, the better: On Mondays and Wednesdays, homework starts by 5 p.m. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, homework starts at 7 p.m., after soccer practice and dinner.
- **Encourage your teen to use a consistent organizational structure throughout the school year for each subject.** English homework goes in the red folder; science assignments in the green binder.

- **Teens should write down all of their assignments, regardless of whether the teacher posts the homework online or texts reminders each night.** Studies have shown that the act of writing something down makes us more apt to remember it. Plus, it saves time hunting around online and avoids the "my teacher didn't post the homework" excuse.
- **Have a designated study space where your teen can work each day, even if it's just a quieter corner.** Stock the space with all the school supplies they'll need. Many teens still enjoy shopping for and picking out their own school supplies, so make it a collaborative effort if possible.

If getting the homework done becomes an ongoing battle, it may help to delegate the supervision aspect, according to Hilary Parsons Alexander, a licensed professional clinical counselor with the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Pediatric Behavioral Health.

"If there's a power struggle, consider using your school counselor or intervention specialist, an outside tutoring center, or even an older teen who wants to earn cash or service hours," says Alexander.

And remember that backpack your child dropped at the door when he came in? Alexander recommends teens employ a weekly routine called the Backpack Dump, which involves sorting the contents into three piles:

Pile 1: Toss

Pile 2: Keep in backpack (neatly)

Pile 3: File into a designated location

Alexander recommends scheduling the Backpack Dump as a weekly appointment: "At 6 p.m. on Wednesday, let's meet at the dining room table to sort out your backpack." (See our tips on managing paperwork on page 36.)

Teens should also employ daily maintenance using the 30-second rule. "If it takes less than 30 seconds to deal with something, put it in the right spot now," she says. Teens will need reminders to do this for the first month until it becomes something they remember to do on their own, she adds.

Says Levitt, "The ultimate goal is to help them establish good habits now so they can eventually do this on their own. And it's okay if you waited until 10th grade to start—better late than never. You won't be there in college to look over their shoulder, so this is your chance to help them before they spread their wings." ■



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LET'S GET ORGANIZED!

Back-to-School Tips for the New School Year

By Catherine Newman

In France, the end of summer vacation is marked by a period of mourning called *la rentrée*. According to a friend of mine who lived there, “You greet people by saying ‘How is your rentrée going?’ They say ‘Bad, as usual,’ and you say, ‘Mine too.’”

Even if you’ve been counting the seconds until your kids get back on the school bus, this is a challenging time of transitions for your teens: new schedules, reams of paperwork, endless homework, complex routines.

Factor in the uber-transition of being a teenager—on the cusp of adulthood yet still, sometimes, surprisingly dependent—and you’re looking at a perfect back-to-school storm.

Many parents, counting on increasing teenage independence at home—after all, they’re not babies anymore—take on more responsibility and hours at work during this family stage. At home, and especially at back-to-school time, that likely means every member of the household is heading somewhere different in the morning, and that everyone is busy.

We consulted parenting and organization experts for practical advice on managing a go-go-go household at this time of year, keeping in mind that families with teenagers are transitioning both from summer to school year while simultaneously supporting the bigger transition from dependent child to independent young adult. (Just bear in mind that these are not one-size-fits-all strategies. If something is working for you, go ahead and let it work.)

YES, THEY CAN!

What happened to those “Do it my own self!” toddlers? They have disappeared inside the teens who want to lie on the carpet while you make



Tick Tick Tick ...

the Problem with Time and Teens

Many teens—and some adults, too—struggle with estimating how much time they need to complete their tasks. Leslie Josel, creator of the website *Order Out of Chaos*, says, “The problem with organizing time is that it’s very difficult to see. It’s amorphous. It passes.” She recommends making time tangible for your teens.

Josel suggests an analog (non-digital) clock in every room of the house—even (especially!) the bathroom—so that your kids can see time in tangible wedges rather than as an abstract number.

Although they’re old-school, a family wall calendar and a physical academic planner can also be good ideas. “Teenagers go to their phones and get distracted by all their social media,” says Josel. Paper helps give weight to obligations.

their sandwiches. But getting your kids to do more of their own self-organizing will actually free up a lot of your time—while simultaneously fostering independence and teaching crucial life skills.

Lisa Damour, psychologist and author of *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood*, says to think about this in terms of handing over the responsibility gradually: first modeling the desired behaviors while you do it for them; then coaching while you do it with them; and, finally, standing by to offer support while they do it, yes, all by their own selves.

Damour breaks it down by back-to-school task, so we can see exactly where we can expect our kids to be moving from dependence to coaching to independence in the tween and teen years.

→ Waking up.

Up until age 12, parents should be coaching their child to use an alarm clock and get themselves up—reminders to set the alarm,

and occasional parent waking, may still be needed. By the teen years, Damour says, it is reasonable to expect independence in this area. Teens are notorious night owls, though, and may tend to sleep in when allowed to do as they wish. Encourage your kids go to bed on time so they get plenty of sleep. (This may mean putting their tempting devices to sleep, too—in another room.) Your kids may not know that teens need between nine and nine and a half hours of sleep each night.

→ Making breakfast.

Your child can achieve do-it-himself status by age 10. If he skips breakfast when it’s left completely up to him, offering a range of easy grab-and-go options (such as yogurt, smoothies, and frozen burritos) can help support the healthy habit of eating breakfast.

→ Packing lunch.

Damour says that by age 8, we can reasonably expect our kids to pack

their own lunches. Even if you didn’t hand over the lunch reins back then, it’s not too late to surrender this task. Dedicating a fridge drawer or shelf to kids’ lunch stuff can streamline the process for teens-in-a-hurry, and also steer them toward the healthy options you want them to choose. As kids get older, “packing” can also include more preparation of the food itself—like cutting vegetables and making sandwiches.

→ Filling out paperwork.

Who doesn’t want to delegate this tedious task? Damour suggests having your tweens watch you fill out paperwork—try medical or school forms—to learn how it’s done, then transfer primary responsibility for this job to kids age 13 and up. (See our sidebar on paperwork.)

→ Keeping track of schedules.

Tweens and teens should know what

activities happen on which days; Damour suggests that kids can do this by age 12. Post each family member's schedule in a prominent place, ideally near the calendar, and let the teen add her items. (See our sidebar on managing schedules.)

→ Taking charge of what they need to bring to school.

It may sound simple, but packing a backpack is a moving target, with the necessary contents changing each day. Is it a band practice day? Does he need his sneakers? Did that report need to be printed out? Coach kids closely on this task through about age 11, says Damour, and then transition the 12-and-up crowd to do it alone. When handing over this responsibility, encourage them to pack their bags the night before, and ask them the questions about what they need for the next day until they can do it themselves.

→ Getting homework done on time.

Managing daily homework loads in a timely way can be a challenge for some teens. Damour expects independence a

bit later here—at age 14 and up—with parents more closely monitoring the completion of homework for younger students. To foster independence, have your child use an assignment book, and encourage him to check it at the same time each day—perhaps side-by-side with you if he seems to be neglecting his workload. The goal, though, is to establish a habit that ultimately does not involve the parent, so be ready to step back as he starts to get into a daily routine.

→ Organizing long-term projects.

This part of the homework load is the trickiest. Kids will usually need lots of coaching, says Damour, on how to break

Tips from the Trenches: Parents Share Ideas that Work

Easy breakfast. Egg and cheese sandwich on a roll—to go.

—Alisa Greenbacher

Lunch hack. Help your kids make big batches of favorites like chili and pulled pork and freeze them in thermos-sized portions for thaw-and-go lunchbox packing.

—Michael Millner

After the game. Empty sports bags right when they come home—for example, bags of sweaty workout clothes should go right in the washing machine, so as to avoid the dreaded "Are there any clean shorts?!" cry on a school morning. —Ann Hallock

Be prepared. Pack lunch the night before, pick out clothes the night before, and make sure the laptop is plugged in before bed.

—Jennifer Lawrence Birnbaum

Phone-free time. Phones stay downstairs/away from where they are doing homework (also a good time to charge them).

—Ann Hallock

Maintain a bedtime. Know how much sleep your child really needs (it's probably more than you think), and make every effort to have them in bed with the lights off before they actually need to be asleep. Take away the electronics and plug them in somewhere other than the bedroom.

—Launa Schweizer



Photos: Beth Segal

Overwhelmed by Paper?

Try This.

Piles on the kitchen counter. A to-do stack on the desk. Unopened mail near the front door. Papers spilling out of kids' backpacks. Now, quick—where is that permission slip/bill/medical form/invitation?

Even relatively organized households can struggle with paper—because it just keeps coming. At the beginning of the school year, with flyers and forms coming home in bushels from school, it can be even worse.

Lisa Woodruff, a professional organizer and founder of the website and podcast Organize 365, says the answer is not to scramble to manage every piece of paper as it comes into the house. “Everything is not an emergency,” is how she puts it. Instead, she recommends creating what she calls the “Sunday Basket”—a container into which you put every action-requiring piece of paper as you get it: mail, forms, bills, receipts that need filing, prescriptions to fill.

Come Sunday, you empty the basket and deal: recycle junk mail, pay bills, file documents, update calendars, fill out forms, and write checks. “This is not a filing system,” Woodruff cautions. “These are all actionable to-do items. You have to touch every piece of paper in there each week.”

As your kids get older, they should each have their own Sunday Basket, which they'll empty when you do yours: completed school papers, applications, forms to fill out, work and afterschool schedules to add to your family calendars, library books to return, mail from colleges, and long-term project assignments to plan for.

“Every minute you spend in planning saves 15 minutes in execution,” Woodruff says. “You're teaching your kids to be proactive instead of reactive. The average American spends 55 minutes a day looking for things.”

Now, if it's a paper you or your teen are looking for, you'll finally know where to look: the Sunday Basket.

up long-term projects into pieces with interim deadlines. By age 15, your child should be mostly independent in taking a large project and planning how to tackle it bit by bit—and hopefully not pulling panicked all-nighters the night before the due date. Talk to her about how you break down your own large projects.

→ Communicating with coaches and teachers.

When your kids are in college, you won't be calling their professors, so now is the time to teach them to handle their own tricky situations with the other adults in their lives. While kids are learning, Damour says, role-play difficult conversations and work together to draft their email communications with adults. You can hand over responsibility for small conversations, like talking to the school librarian about the lost book, but don't anticipate that your teen will be the primary communicator with coaches and teachers until about age 16.

Re-entry to the school year may never be easy—and certainly no one ever said parenting is. But with these tips from our experts and fellow parents (see our sidebars for more), perhaps it can at least be a bit less chaotic. ■



Photo: Beth Segal

I'm a Mess.

Things I found in my locker:

6 pairs of jeans (I own five pairs of jeans)
8-month-old fruit (my best guess: apple)
An overdue library book (from my previous school)
2 Spanish workbooks (I do not take Spanish)

As you may have guessed from my locker list, I am disorganized. I have been disorganized for my entire life. It started when I was a toddler, when my parents gave me an organization kit. I promptly lost it. I can lose anything. I have lost water bottles, shirts, pants, electronic devices (I am writing this from my mom's computer, as I have lost mine), shoes, pets, and fidget spinners. I have lost five fidget spinners. I also lose jackets; I have lost more jackets than my brother owns.

I claim that my locker is not messy, but "alternatively clean." I have dozens of pencils hidden there, but I can never find one when I need one. In math, I asked a friend for a pencil so many times that he started

putting a pencil on my desk beforehand. Turns out, my pencil woes aren't completely self-generated. Once at a parent-teacher conference, my teacher complained to my mom that I never had any pencils, to which my mother replied, "Can I borrow a pencil to write this all down?"

Humor aside, it has affected my schoolwork. I constantly leave homework at home, or can't find it in the mess that I call my binder. Teachers often complain not about my quality of work, but the fact that they can't read it because a food stain is covering it up. I know I need to get organized, but it's hard to maintain. These kinds of things are just harder for some people than others.

Entering my last year in middle school, I realize that I will never be the kid with alphabetized notebooks and color-coded containers for everything. But what I know is—I can't go on with this level of chaos. We disorganized teenagers should be able to be ourselves and do what we want with our stuff within reason. But I think I need to clean my locker.—*Aidan Kohn-Murphy*



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HOW TO BE A TEEN WHO **DOESN'T DRINK**

Not every teenager wants to drink alcohol, but the pressure is seemingly always there from society, media, and friends.

We'll share tactics to support our teens in sticking with their decision not to drink.

By Laura Richards



It's no secret that drinking is part of American teen culture. It's a quieter fact, though, that not every teenager wants to drink alcohol.

Some may simply want to follow the law, or are unable to drink due to a medical condition or illness. Others might be concerned about alcoholism in the family, or just may not enjoy drinking.

Whatever the reason, you can support your child's choice in a number of positive, proactive ways.

Jessica Greher Traue, Director of Wellness and Prevention at Bentley University in Boston, emphasizes that talking about drinking is paramount. "One of the most helpful things you can do is simply talk to your teen, and make it an ongoing conversation. There's a body of research that shows that teens whose parents and caregivers talked about these issues actually consume less alcohol, hang out with peers who consume less alcohol, and get better grades."

Clinical psychologist Dr. Jennifer Guttman agrees with the need to have frank conversations about alcohol. She tells parents, "It's important to empower our children not to give into social pressure to drink." She suggests explaining

to your teen that if she's being pressured to drink, it may be because others need validation for their own drinking. "People feel better about their choices when everyone does the same thing."

Share practical strategies kids can use to beat the social pressure to drink. When teens are in a situation where drinking is happening, Traue suggests holding a cup but filling it with a non-alcoholic drink. "If someone sees a cup in their hand, they will assume they do not need a drink." Also, Traue says, "If

"TEENS OFTEN REPORT THAT 'EVERYONE IS DRINKING,' BUT STUDIES SHOW A DOWNWARD TREND IN TEEN DRINKING."

they want to get out of the setting, set up a secret code text message or emoji as a distress signal to you, or to peers."

Another option is that a non-drinking teen with a driver's license can be the designated driver, which can automatically put them in a "pass" zone when it comes to alcohol pressure.

In addition, Guttman tells teens, "Saying that you take medication that doesn't interact well with alcohol is a good strategy to seamlessly get out of drinking without social ramifications." And, Guttman says, "Most of my clients with illnesses [that forbid alcohol-

ic beverages] successfully find friends who are not big drinkers to attend parties with so that they don't feel left out."

Spending a lot of time as a non-drinker at heavy-drinking parties can be tiresome, though, so finding alternative activities can also be helpful. "Assumptions play a big role in social choices," Traue says. "If a group of peers assumes that drinking is the norm, or drinking is the only fun thing to do and no one in the group ever suggests an alternative—even one they all find fun—then the group may fall into a pattern where all they do is drink." Sit down with teens and brainstorm a list of activities that they and their friends enjoy, and support their initiation of these activities by offering your home, your transportation, or whatever other practical support you can give.

Finally, remind your teenager that perceptions of use are often greater than reality, says Traue. Teens often report that "everyone is drinking," but studies show a downward trend in teen drinking, and that a significant majority (nearly two-thirds of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders) report having had zero alcoholic drinks in the past twelve months. "Sharing positive normative data like this can be reassuring, reinforce choice, and promote the healthy majority," says Traue. ■

From Homeless Teen to College Student

TEEN

By DaQuann Harrison

The first time I remember getting in trouble, I was 8 or 9. I had been playing around with matches in my basement, and then I brought them to school. I went to the bathroom, lit a paper towel on fire, and put it out. A teacher smelled the smoke and sent me to the principal's office. The principal put me up for expulsion.

But I guess there's more I haven't told you about what was happening in my life.

I had to protect my mom a lot. She ended up with an abusive partner, and, as her son, I felt like I had to defend her. I would throw irons, beer bottles—whatever—at the man when he was hurting my mom. I would throw his clothes in the garbage. I killed his fish. I worried I would come home and find my mom dead.

We moved so many times. I can't even remember the first time I was homeless. I slept in cars, motels, malls—wherever we could find shelter.

My cousin would babysit, and he taught my sister and me how to steal food. We would have garbage bags in our pockets, and while our cousin would distract the owner, we would grab drinks, ice cream, gum, gummy bears, and chips.



Ramen noodles, too—can't forget those.

I was in survival mode back then. There was a beating—and molesting—by a family friend, but I wanted to keep the peace. Back then I didn't tell anyone about the molesting, even when the bruises got worse and they took me to the hospital. Even when Child Protective Services was called.

About a month or so later, I got into a different school. I kept getting suspended left and right. Petty stuff.

After a few weeks, I was in the library and I tried to commit suicide. The teachers saw me trying to put pencils and stuff down my throat. I was haunted by what that man had done to me.

The next few years, I was going to school but kept getting suspensions. I was on probation. I kept moving around a lot. I begged my probation officer to send me to Juvie or the Youth Center. I would call her and tell her I was going to do something dumb. I didn't see any

hope. It was a safe place to stay. I heard the food was good.

When I was 16, I became a victim of bullying over a girl. I began to receive phone threats and house visits from the bullies. They even stole some of my belongings. It got worse, and one day I saw threats against me on social media. The pressure got so tough for me, I thought about suicide so I wouldn't have to endure the pain and embarrassment.

I didn't know what to do. I grabbed my airsoft gun. I removed the air tank and clip because I didn't want to hurt anyone. I was just bringing it to school as a scare tactic. I also took a kitchen knife. I left home not knowing if I was going to return.

I didn't see my bullies that morning, but school found out about the weapons. I was arrested and taken into custody. The judge released me after three days and dropped the charges, but I went home to hear the news that I was facing

permanent expulsion. After that, I emotionally broke down because of all the hard work I had put in for my education.

My probation officer referred me to an outstanding organization, The Student Advocacy Center. A mentor was assigned to me.

I was suspicious at first because I'm an independent person. But I'm glad I took that step because my mentor, Anell Eccleston, is truly the best thing that happened to me in a very, very long time. I believe we made an unbreakable bond, and that's what I have been wanting all my life.

Anell met with me every week, sometimes multiple times a week. I can truly call him one of my top supporters. He never gave up on me. He helped with clothing, food, transportation, getting back into school, getting my school work done, graduating early, and applying to college. Just so much.

When I finally returned to high school, I had so many people nagging me: Anell, someone from the sheriff's office, staff at other organizations who helped me, and a bunch of staff from a district where I wasn't even a student. They drove me nuts. But I went to school.

The light went on for me, finally. In the end, I graduated early and went straight to college.

It takes a village. It takes love, hope, consistent persistence, and support for each student. We need relationships that last, and we need a lot of them. We, as a society, can't give up on students like me.

DaQuann W. Harrison, 18, is a college student and national youth empowerment speaker. He believes in keeping the faith and never giving up, no matter the life circumstances.

Editors' Note: In this section of the magazine, the parent perspective typically follows the teen perspective. Not every teen, though, has a parent who can contribute. Instead, we asked our expert to weigh in not only on what can help teens like DaQuann, but also how other—perhaps more stable—families can offer support to teens they know who struggle with heavy personal burdens and behavioral difficulties.

EXPERT

By **Barbara Greenberg**



I read DaQuann's story with a tremendous amount of respect for the courage and bravery that he has shown through incredible adversity

in his young life. First, I would like to thank DaQuann for sharing his story. It is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and to his specific desire to live life well despite all the obstacles tragically placed in his path.

His story is also a demonstration of the power of human connections. We benefit when we have someone who believes in us—someone who cares about our very being. We all need mentors as we navigate our youth and teen years. Some of us are lucky to come by this naturally and have parents or guardians who are healthy enough (mentally and physically) to assume this role. Some, of course, are not.

If your teen has a friend who seems to lack a strong structure at home, con-

sider reaching out. Invite this child for a meal, or to join you for a movie. Kids are often willing to "borrow" friends' parents if they feel invited.

If this teen in your family's life needs additional mentors—and they may, if home is not a safe, stable place—you can also help by connecting this teen with other reliable adults. In DaQuann's case, he was extremely fortunate to be paired with a mentor through his probation officer, a relationship that seems to have literally saved DaQuann's life.

It needn't wait until a probation officer enters the picture, though. Teachers, coaches, and parents can work to connect the teen with support in community-based organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, as well as religious organizations and local colleges and schools. A teen in trouble does not typically have the bandwidth to seek out these resources alone; just looking into resources and helping to connect the teen can be a critically important support.

You see, DaQuann got it right when he said that it takes a village. Indeed, it does. There is probably not a person among us who is able to get through their life journey without at least one consistently loving and supportive person. Thank you, DaQuann and Anell, for illustrating the importance and necessity of mentors in our lives. Good luck and Godspeed as you continue your journey.

Dr. Barbara Greenberg, Ph.D., is a teen, adolescent, child, and family psychologist licensed in Connecticut and New York. After 21 years of running an inpatient adolescent unit at a private psychiatric hospital in New York, she moved on to private practice, consulting work, writing, and television. Her practice is located in Fairfield County, Connecticut.

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AFTER BRACES: Protecting Your Investment

Your son or daughter has spent two years in braces and elastics, and you've invested a lot in those teeth. How do you protect your investment and avoid additional orthodontic care? *Your Teen* asked Dr. Philip D. Bomeli, DDS, MS, of Solon Orthodontics in Ohio for advice on protecting that beautiful smile.

The braces are off. You can stop worrying about your kid's teeth now, right?

Patients are most surprised when they learn they are never finished. There is an assumption that after a few years, they don't have to worry. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We now know that teeth move continually—they don't stop. The research shows that it actually takes 18 months to two years for the underlying structures in the bones

and gums to reorganize and to support the new tooth placement.

How quickly can teeth move after the braces come off?

There can be movement in just a few days. If you initially got braces because of some stubborn spacing issues, for example, those spaces can open up again very quickly. So if you go to summer camp for a week and forget that retainer at home, teeth can move in that very short period.



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This happens pretty frequently, and I know it can be very frustrating for patients—and for their parents as well. Whenever a patient asks me, “How long do I have to wear this retainer?” my answer is always: “How long do you want your teeth to stay straight?”

How effective are retainers for keeping teeth in place?

Retainers are very effective—if they are used full-time. The “danger zone” is the first two years after treatment, when the teeth are most at risk of movement. Let’s face it: It can be hard to get your teen to wear a removable device 24/7 after two years of braces. We could say to them, “Just wear it at night.” But in my experience, this is a slippery slope. Kids hear that as permission not to wear it all the time—when in reality, they need to wear it most of the time to keep things from shifting. Excluding meals and maybe sports practice, they should be wearing that retainer.

What do you say to motivate a teen to wear their retainer?

I speak honestly and directly to them and I’m very straightforward. “Here is how your teeth look after braces. The retainer is how you’re going to keep them looking like this. Your teeth will move quickly if you don’t wear your retainers as instructed.” I also frequently hear parents say to their teens, “The next time you need braces, it’s going to be on you.” Or, “You won’t like your teeth as an adult if you don’t take care of them now.”

How long does the traditional acrylic and wire retainer last?

When properly cared for, a retainer can last for several years—but not forever. The mouth is a very harsh environment. Everyone is different—if you grind your teeth, the wear and tear will show up faster. I’ve had patients who will lose several of these, or throw them out on



their school lunch tray, or leave them at restaurants. I should also warn you, dogs love retainers. I’ve seen them chew up the plastic case to get to the retainer. Make sure you keep them out of reach!

What options do patients have for retainers?

Parents who had braces may remember the big horseshoe-shaped acrylic and wire retainers which cover the roof of your mouth. We still have those (and they come in all kinds of fun colors), but now we also have new bonded or glued-in retainers. These consist of a little wire that lies behind your top front four teeth, and behind your bottom front six teeth. No one can see it, it doesn’t have to be taken out to eat, and it can’t get lost or forgotten. It’s just so easy for patients and very effective at keeping teeth in position. They are not permanent because they can be removed in about a half an hour. Probably 99% of our patients choose this option instead of the traditional removable retainer.

What do you do for a patient who has experienced some tooth movement?

Frequently, we will see patients come back for treatment if, for example, their lower teeth have moved. We have a variety of options for these patients. If a space has opened up, we can put just a few brackets on those lower teeth to squeeze them back together and do that in about six months. Invisible align-

ers such as Invisalign can be a great option for fixing post-orthodontic issues such as spacing or a tooth that has turned. If retainers are not worn properly in the months right after braces are removed, we will frequently see some relapse and the need for a short course of revisional treatment. This usually only requires six to nine months of treatment but can stretch into a year or more if more complicated.

Should patients schedule frequent follow-up visits after the braces are off?

After the braces are removed, we will see a patient six weeks later for a quick visit. Then we schedule visits for three, six, and 12 months. After that, we don’t automatically schedule them. If they have an issue they want to address, they will come in, but we don’t ever dismiss them. We want to be sure their teeth continue to look good and that they’re happy with their smile. ■

Interview by Jane Parent

Philip Bomeli, DDS, MS, is an orthodontist with Solon Orthodontics in Solon, Ohio. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame and graduate degrees from The Ohio State University.



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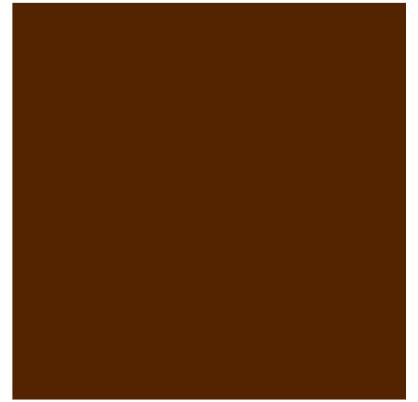
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Swap the Classroom for a Real-World Education?

Many colleges and universities help prepare students for the real world by giving them paid on-the-job training while they are still enrolled as full-time college students. Could this model of education be right for your student?

By Joanna Nesbit

When Lisa Wood's twin sons, Andrew and Nathaniel, began their college search process, they learned about co-op programs and quickly began to zero in on them. Both boys were interested in engineering, and Lisa knew that universities with co-op programs could give them a leg up when it came time to realize the ultimate goal: full-time employment after college.

Co-ops are one form of experiential learning—hands-on learning outside the classroom—that colleges and universities may offer to help students make connections between a field of study and future employment opportunities. Many co-ops are structured around engineering or technical degrees, but universities sometimes offer co-ops for other majors as well.

At Bowling Green State University, for example, students in the College of Technology, Architecture and Applied Engineering are required to complete a co-op as part of their degree. Other BGSU majors don't require a co-op, but if a student wants to incorporate one, the career center will provide tools for the job search, explains Danielle Dimhoff, associate director of BGSU's career center.



WHAT IS A CO-OP?

Co-ops provide students with real-world job experience by giving them the opportunity to apply their classroom learning to a semester (or more) of meaningful work with an employer in their field of study. The work is almost always paid—often well above minimum wage—and a student can gain valuable skills and experience, making them a more attractive candidate to employers.

Employers like the co-op model because it's a cost-effective recruiting strategy that enables companies to identify entry-level talent early on, says Mariah Short, HR coordinator of Keller Logistics Group, a full-service logistics company that partners with BGSU. "Co-ops give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent," she says—making them a win for the student and the company.

HOW DO CO-OPS WORK?

Students attend campus classes full time during their first year. Details of programs may vary by school, but beginning sophomore year, they may alternate semesters of study with full-time work

experience in business, industry, government, healthcare, and finance. At BGSU, for example, co-op employers include Amazon, Adobe, Cisco, ProMedica, and JP Morgan, just to name a few.

Students may stay in the same city as their university or relocate to another state or even abroad for their co-op, and they typically receive a housing allowance in addition to their pay.

WHAT KIND OF STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM CO-OPS?

"Students who have the desire to be trained and get that hands-on experience

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will excel in this type of program,” Dimhoff says. Co-ops also help students sharpen their career goals because they might learn a particular field isn’t for them, she explains.

For example, Andrew Wood’s co-op involved computer programming in a traditional office setting. “One of the things Andrew learned is that he did not want to be a cubicle-dweller,” says Lisa. After completing his co-op, Andrew decided to work at startups, which he found more stimulating.

Nate Wood’s co-op, by contrast, involved working on the floor at a steel manufacturing plant, complete with hard hat and steel-toed boots. He loved the hands-on aspect of that work, which led him to seek out a lab position on campus that involved manufacturing with a 3-D printer.

One thing they both agreed on, says Lisa: “They loved earning money!” For students who need to contribute to their own tuition costs, this can be a big bonus on top of the educational and career benefits co-ops may provide. ■

Co-Op Questions to Ask on the College Tour:

What majors offer a co-op, and what are the requirements?

The degree programs that offer co-ops can vary from college to college. Some degrees require one semester of work; others may require alternate semesters of study and work or shorter blocks of time with two or more employers.

How long does it take co-op students to complete their degree?

Depending on the number of co-op blocks a student completes, a degree could take five years instead of four. But, keep in mind, students don’t pay tuition during their work semesters.

What other types of experiential learning do you offer?

In addition to co-ops, many colleges offer internships (both paid and unpaid), clinical lab placements, and practicums (typically for healthcare majors).

Finally, students may also want to ask what percentage of students who desire a co-op get a placement, and how many are ultimately hired by an employer upon graduation.



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SAVING FOR COLLEGE IN 529 PLANS:

Is It Worth It?

By Diana Simeon



If you're worried because you haven't saved much—or anything at all—for your child's college costs, you're not alone. According to Sallie Mae, a leading provider of student loans, only about half of American families are saving for college, and even the savers have an average of just \$16,000 set aside.

The bad news: That's just a small fraction of the hefty price tag of college. The good news: With a student in middle school, or even in early high school, you still have time to bolster your savings in a helpful way. Here's what the experts say.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

The old adage holds true when it comes to saving for college. "It's never too late to save because every dollar you save is a dollar less you will have to borrow," says Mark Kantrowitz, Ph.D., a nationally recognized expert on paying for college. "And every dollar you borrow is going to cost you about \$2 to pay back." This is an overall average for all borrowers. Some will pay more, and others will pay less, depending on the type of loan, fees, interest rate, and other factors.

Even minimal savings can be helpful. Take books, which—depending on your student's major—could cost several thousand dollars or more in total. Why use borrowed money to pay double for those books if you can instead save that money over the next few years?

SAVINGS DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT FINANCIAL AID.

You may have heard that saving for college isn't worth it because colleges will

reduce your student's financial aid package by whatever amount you've got in the bank. Not true.

The most-used financial aid formula calculates parental assets at just 5.64 percent. "That means for every \$10,000 you've saved, the reduction in financial aid will only be \$564," explains Timothy Gorrell, executive director of the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority (OTTA), which administers CollegeAdvantage, Ohio's 529 college savings plan.

In other words, you'll get to use most of your college savings in addition to any financial aid. But if you borrow that \$10,000 for college expenses instead of saving it ahead of time, the extra loan will cost you much more in interest than that \$564 reduction in financial aid.

USE A 529 COLLEGE SAVINGS PLAN.

You may be tempted to save for college in a regular savings account, but there's a better way to do it: a 529 college savings plan.

529 plans, which are sponsored by nearly every state, offer a tax-advantaged way to save for college. The money you save in a 529 grows free from federal and state taxes; a regular savings account does not. Withdrawals are also tax-free, as long as the money is used for qualified education expenses. "That includes tuition, room and board, books, computers, and other supplies," says Gorrell.

You can use money saved in a 529 plan toward a bachelor's degree, an associate's degree, a graduate degree, or even a vocational degree. "There is also no shelf life on a 529 plan," says Gorrell.

"It's not like you have a certain amount of time to use it. It can continue to grow."

For example, if you start a 529 plan when your child is in middle school, you could wait to tap the funds until toward the end of college. "That can be a decade of savings," notes Gorrell. "Or you could use it for graduate school."

It's easy to set up a 529, but you'll want to do some research. "You are not limited to your state's college-savings plan," notes Gorrell. In other words, you can put your money in any 529 plan of any state you want, regardless of what state your child will attend college in or whether you have any connection to the state that sponsors the plan. In 35 states, residents can get a tax deduction or other tax benefits on their state income tax for investing in their own state's plan—an advantage worth exploring.

In general, you'll want to look for a plan with low fees, strong ratings, and other advantages like tax benefits. Most importantly, regardless of what plan you choose, make that important choice to start saving for your child's future college costs now. ■

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Photo: Beth Segal

PERIODS: Don't Leave Your Daughter Unprepared

By Whitney Fleming

Growing up, my mother and I didn't discuss menstruation. In fact, I learned the basics from a combination of my preteen friends, a dreadful 20-minute lecture in health class by the female gym teacher, and Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.

When I started my period for the first time, I used toilet paper for two days before I worked up the nerve to tell my mother. The next day, a box of maxi pads and tampons appeared underneath my sink, and that was that.

Today, young girls have more resources than ever to help explain puberty, including extensive sex education in schools, numerous book options, and

even YouTube videos. Still, it is a daunting conversation for some parents and girls.

When should you start talking about periods?

Dr. Jennifer Blount, a Chicago-area pediatrician, suggests regularly discussing health and wellness issues with your daughter from the time she is very young, but to specifically prepare her for menstruation once her breast buds start developing.

"Many parents think there is a specific age at which they have to have 'the talk,'" Blount says, but it's much more important to identify where your daughter is in her pubertal development. Pubic and underarm hair has more to do with

testosterone, but breast development is due to estrogen, which is an indicator of impending menstruation."

Although most parents have a more open dialogue with their daughter about puberty than previous generations, some girls are not receptive to discussing it. In fact, some girls even actively avoid it.

"Embarrassment is often an endpoint for conversations. You know you have pushed the subject far enough when your daughter is beet red or slightly horrified," says Dr. Cara Natterson, a pediatrician and collaborator on the bestselling book, *The Care and Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls*. "Let her

know that it's okay to feel that way, but also remind her that it's all a part of life, and learning about puberty from a trusted resource is key."

Dr. Natterson also suggests giving your reluctant daughter a few ways to communicate with you to make discussions more bearable, such as holding conversations in the car instead of face to face, taking turns writing in a Q&A journal to exchange information, or talking at bedtime in the dark.

"The point is to meet her where she is and try to communicate in a way that works for your daughter," she adds.

Another tip is to use your own experiences as a starting point. The most common answer young girls provide when asked if they have any questions is "I don't know," so having personal anecdotes handy can keep it casual. Saying things like "When I was your age, it terrified me that I could get mine at school," or "I worried that it would hurt," can help

address your daughter's concerns and simultaneously get her talking.

When your daughter does begin her period, remember to take your cues from her. If she is struggling to communicate with you, perhaps throwing an elaborate "Period Party" to celebrate her womanhood may not be the way to go. Instead, consider making a fun date to get your nails done or providing a basket filled with comfort items such as new pajamas, sweet treats, and your favorite book when you were her age.

Keep in mind, the kindest thing may be just to give her some space to process what is going on with her body. Despite a parent's best efforts in creating an open dialogue, some girls still don't know how to tell their mother that Flo has visited. If your daughter struggles to talk to you, remember it's not about you—and even though your feelings may be hurt, reiterate that you are always there to talk and listen when she is ready. ■



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HOMework vs. INSTAGRAM

Who's Winning?

By Sandra Gordon

When 14-year-old Ellie Rosic does her homework, she says her phone is “crucial,” says her dad, Andy, an IT specialist in Vancouver, Washington. “But as I see it,” he adds, “2 percent of the time, Ellie is asking friends about homework, and 98 percent of the time she’s texting random emojis, checking Facebook and Pinterest, and taking BuzzFeed quizzes.” Ellie also has her iPad propped up next to her laptop to watch YouTube or stream music. “Homework takes three times as long because of the distractions,” Andy says.

He’s right. Although some teens would argue that their generation is just

better at multitasking, and that getting “snaps” while reading World History helps them concentrate, don’t buy it.

“Multitasking makes you more distracted,” says Jodi Gold, M.D., author of *Screen Smart Parenting* and director of the Gold Center for Mind, Health and Wellness in New York. “When your brain switches back and forth, your ability to attend to and be efficient at both activities decreases. It’s more tiring for your brain, too.”

Still, “technology is here to stay, and we have to find a place for it,” says Katie Schumacher, author of *Don’t Press Send: A Mindful Approach to*

Social Media. After all, FaceTiming or video chatting with someone while doing your homework together can be productive. But the challenge then becomes not getting on social media or YouTube.

What can you do to help your teen stay on task? Here are some smart steps to get the job done.

Delegate the device policing.

Parental control apps limit screen time so teens can get their homework done distraction-free. “We installed OurPact on our teens’ phones because



it will shut down access to social media and apps during homework time,” says Amy Carney, mom to 15-year-old triplet sons Kade, Aidan, and Cole, a 14-year-old daughter, Morgan, and a 10-year-old son, Phoenix, in Paradise Valley, Arizona. “We don’t always have the schedule turned on, but we’ll do so if we see our teens trying to juggle homework and socializing online,” Carney says.

An even better idea? Don’t be the middleman. “One of the biggest challenges in parenting today is helping teens to self-regulate,” says Dr. Gold. “The truth is, teens are growing up in a world where they’re going to have to deal with the distraction of technology. They have to learn how to modulate it.”

When you are using technology-blocking apps such as OurPact or Forcefield, Dr. Gold recommends talking to your teens about the myth of multitasking and suggesting that they

learn how to use these apps to block themselves from their most distracting sites for certain amounts of time during homework sessions.

Create some distance.

In lieu of technology-blocking apps, teach your teens to get into the habit of putting their phones in another room while they’re doing their homework. Distancing them from their phone creates a physical barrier that minimizes tech temptation and can help them move away from multitasking. “Often, teens will say, ‘Fine. I’ll just finish this before I go and check my phone,’” Dr. Gold says. Keep your distance, too. “Don’t say your teens aren’t allowed to check their phones.” Let them, if they want to—guiding them to set their own limits may be more effective than your limits.

Take device breaks.

While your teen’s phone is in another room or a technology blocking app is on, encourage them to set a timer. When the timer goes off after 20, 30, or 45 minutes of homework, they can take a 10-minute Snapchat break. “Studying for small amounts of time but with more focus and taking breaks maximizes efficiency and helps teach time management,” Dr. Gold says. A device break can also boost motivation when it becomes a reward for accomplishing specific tasks.

Whatever the method, it’s an important life skill for teens to learn how to manage the distractions that technology can present. As most of us grownups know, this isn’t exclusively a teen problem—but the teenage years are a great time to build good tech habits. ■



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Interview with

R.J. PALACIO

If you've had a middle schooler in the past few years, they have probably read *Wonder*, the bestselling 2012 novel about adolescence, feeling different, and what it means to be kind. As we approach the November release date for the movie based on the book, *Your Teen* had the chance to ask author R.J. Palacio some questions.

Why did you decide to write *Wonder*?

I was with my two sons, and we found ourselves in close proximity to a little girl with severe facial differences. That got me thinking about what it must be like to face a world every day that's not quite sure how to face you back. I started writing *Wonder* as a way of exploring the feeling of being "othered." It was also a way for me to talk about kindness and its importance in our everyday lives.

Let's talk about the bully in *Wonder*. What drives him?

Julian is a mixed-up kid. He's not a bad kid, though. I feel the need to defend him often because people hate

him so much, but what they don't know, or they don't learn until they read [follow-up book] *The Julian Chapter*, is that his whole problem is that he's afraid of Auggie [the main character with facial differences] and he doesn't know how to deal with that fear. It manifests itself as hostility. It comes out as cruelty. He's not getting the help he needs at home to overcome this fear or get to the root of it, as his parents are somewhat blinded by their love for him. Mr. Tushman [the principal] tries his darnedest to help, but it's his grandmother who is finally able to get through to him. What's important to know is that while Julian's made a mistake, that mistake doesn't define him.

What have you learned from talking to middle school students?

I think kids are so much more noble and wise than we give them credit for. They are very perceptive about what's going on in the world, and they don't want to be talked down to. On the other hand, things have to be explained or expressed in ways that are age-appropriate. That's why storytelling is so elemental in this process. It allows kids to see themselves through the lens of characters apart from themselves. That little distance gives them just the right kind of objectivity to be truthful with themselves without feeling judged.

How would you describe yourself as a mom?

I'm a very affectionate, full-of-praise, hands-on, and slightly overprotective mom. I'm not of the "withhold praise" variety. In fact, I once suggested a book at [my publishing job at] Workman called *Spoiled for Good: How Indulging Your Child's Dreams and Wishes Makes for Happy, Confident Adults*. I was only half-kidding with that, of course. But I was raised like that, by two parents who thought I could do anything and who loved unconditionally. It made me want to earn their faith in me, and to do good for them, and to do my best.

Your older son recently went through the college application process. What did you learn from the process, and what will you do differently next time?

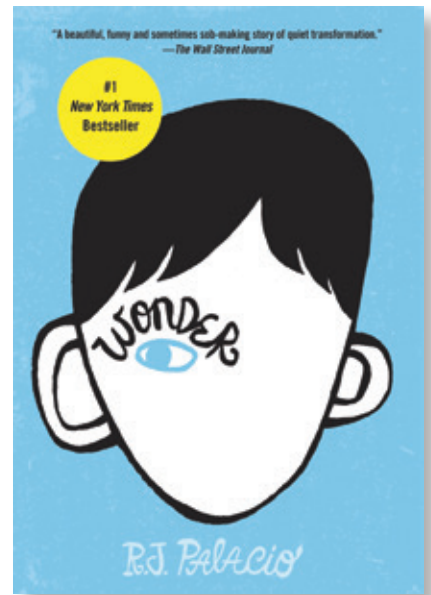
That junior year was so anxiety-ridden for me (and all my friends whose kids were going through the same thing at the time). Looking back, it shouldn't have been, of

course. If I could do it over, I would worry a little less.

From what I've seen of my son's generation, once they got over the heartbreaks of the rejections of their "reach" schools and all that nonsense, every single kid got into the schools that turned out to be the best for them. I'm not saying they were always right, but the college application people seem to really know how to gauge what applicants would be a good fit for their school. And even when that actuality is a little painful for an applicant who's convinced they were meant for this or that school, it's ultimately a good thing for that student.

You know, it's like the reverse of that old Groucho Marx joke: "I'd never want to be part of a club that would have me as a member." Why would you want to go to a school that didn't want you to go there? Be happy with the schools that want you. In the end, my son had his choice of half a dozen fantastic schools and ended up exactly where he was meant to be. ■

Interview by Susan Borison



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How to Love Your Teens When You Hate Them

By Rebecca Meiser

Few people have the ability to get under your skin quite the same way as your teenager. Her attitude, eye-rolling, flagrant disregard for your rules, and questionable judgments can at times make you want to scream your head off and tell her in not-so-subtle terms just how awful she is acting.

But as cathartic as it may seem in the moment, erupting Mount Vesuvius-style is not the most effective way to get through to your child, experts say.

“The first thing you need to remember is that the adolescent you might be angry with is the same child you have always loved deeply,” says Ken Ginsburg, M.D., co-director of the Center for Parent and Teen Communication at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and author of the book, *Raising Kids to Thrive: Balancing Love With Expectations and Protection With Trust*.

When anger overwhelms, it's more important than ever to reinforce connection with your teen, and to tend to the underlying relationship. Managing



Photo: Beth Segal

anger in the moment is a key part of preventing you from saying or doing something that causes long-term hurt.

“When you’re angry, you’re often communicating ineffectively,” says psychologist Richard Weissbourd, a senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and author of *The Parents We Mean To Be: How Well-Intentioned Adults Undermine Children’s Moral and Emotional Development*. “Rather than listen to your words, [your teenager] can focus on the fact that your reaction is unfair and overblown—not on the fact that they did anything wrong.” And in the heat of the moment, you might end up saying painful, unconstructive things that you come to regret later.

Instead, try giving yourself a “time out,” allowing yourself the space and time to simmer down and sort through exactly what you are feeling and how you want to respond, experts say.

Sometimes, in this space, you might find that your anger is only tangentially related to your child’s behavior—and that it’s really about something else, like an unexpected medical bill or a bad review at work.

Even if your anger is justified, it’s important to take time to re-center and breathe, says Dr. Ginsburg.

Remind yourself to give your teen the benefit of the doubt. “Our kids want to please us—that is just as true during their adolescent years as it was when they were 15 months old,” says Dr. Ginsburg. “When they understand that you care deeply—even when you’re angry—they’re going to do what it takes to maintain that connection with you—including doing the right thing behaviorally.”

Of course, teens don’t always make this process easy. There have been times, for instance, that Susan Borison, editor-

in-chief of *Your Teen*, has been so mad at one of her five kids that she didn’t want to look at them, let alone hug them, but a family tradition has come to the rescue. Every Friday evening, her family participates in the Jewish Sabbath tradition of parents blessing their children. “Even if I don’t feel like it, I suck it up and go through the motions anyway,” Borison says, and she is always glad she did. “Inevitably, the anger dissipates.”

Lean on your family’s own unique traditions in times of friction. Whether it’s a hug goodnight, an evening bowl of ice cream together, rousing Mario Kart matchups, or painting each other’s nails each week, maintain those ties that you feel like throwing out the window in the heat of a fight. Each tradition, practiced regularly, carries a history of family connection—and you add a link to that love chain each time you swallow your anger and show up. ■



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Night Shift

By Cheryl Miller-Fitzgerald

When I get home from work at night, the only one up is my dog.

I work at a local TV news station, where I write the news from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m., when the last news show airs and the anchors head home. I'm leaving my house just as my 14-year-old twin boys are finishing up their last class, and I get home long after they've (hopefully) done their homework, turned their iPhones off, and gone to bed.

The job seemed like the right choice after I was downsized from my last job and then spent nearly three

months searching for a writing position in my field. But switching from days to nights has come at a price. When I open the door at night and see Matt's overturned geometry book, Josh's Language Arts essay on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, some empty cups, and a half-eaten family-sized bag of Fritos strewn on the kitchen table, I feel like I'm back in the fifth grade, when Janice had an ice skating party and invited everyone but me.

When I first told a friend about taking the job, she freaked out. "But how's

that going to work?" she asked. "Who's going to do the cooking?" But that was no problem because my husband was only too happy to step in, especially if it meant a reprieve from my steamed kale and baked chicken.

I figured we could all FaceTime each other every night around dinnertime and talk about our days. I'd call them on my short break during the 8 p.m. sports segment, after writing my sixth tease on rising gas prices and try not to carb-shame them as they dug into their burgers and French fries.



The first time we tried this, I heard about the band kid who couldn't play one right note on his euphonium, the girl in homeroom who had a sneezing fit, and the biology teacher who said she had 20 cats. But that lasted for all of two days. On the third day, I called them just as I was getting ready to dig into my salad. No one picked up.

Then I got a text from Josh. "What?"

"Where are you?" I texted back. "It's dinnertime."

I waited. And waited. I shot him a "Huh" emoji. More waiting.

On my way back into the newsroom, I finally got a text back. "We're not five, Mom."

My finger lingered over the "cry baby face" emoji. There it was again, that left-out-of-the-party feeling. It was there, too, when I missed things even Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and all her "leaning in" didn't have to miss—the things that only occur at night, like back-to-school night. Why couldn't teachers hold a back-to-school morning? And how about a soccer game under the sun instead of the stars?

There are benefits to working at night. I don't have to wait on line at the supermarket or bank. I never hit rush-hour traffic, and I never get shut out of a spin class. But once the endorphins wear off, the left-out feeling is replaced with every working mother's nemesis—guilt—and with a vengeance.

Would Josh ever find out that I lied to him about going to his final marching band performance because I got called into work at the last minute? Did Matt's piece of hair that always gets hijacked by his cowlick stick up the night he was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society because I wasn't there to slick it down? Was that bag of half-eaten Fritos all my kids had for dinner that night?

And then, six months into the job, I got home unexpectedly early one evening. The boys were in the kitchen, their textbooks laid out mid-work on the table. Josh was at the sink filling the pasta pot with water while Matt shoved a dirty plate into the dishwasher and then filled the slot with dishwashing cleaner.

He saw my quizzical look. "Dad

showed me," he said.

"And me," said Josh, not to be outdone, waving a spatula with a flourish like a game show host. "I finished my homework," he said. "Later I'll play video games. If that's okay." He stuffed a couple of Oreos in his mouth and adjusted his ear buds.

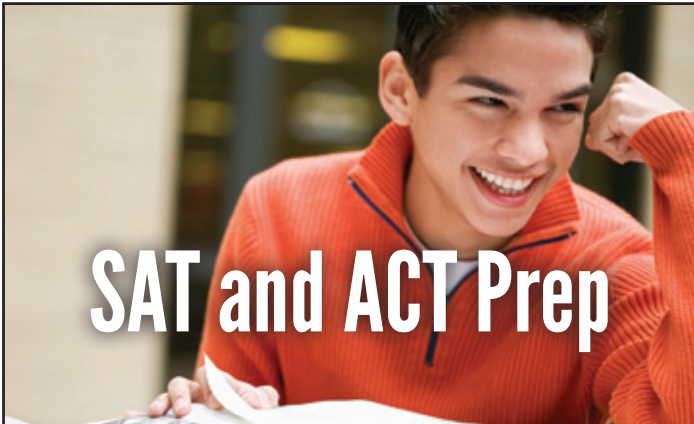
I put away my work stuff, pushed aside yet another nearly empty bag of Fritos, and found a half-written essay on *The Crucible*. "It's almost done," he said. I could see the unspoken question in his eyes. "Will Mom jump in here?"

I glanced at the first paragraph and saw the "B" grade in my head. I opened my mouth to suggest that he start off with a stronger lead—and then I thought twice.

"Good luck," I told him. "Let me know if you need any help."

He smiled, a real smile instead of one for the camera, and picked up the paper. And I put the kettle on for tea, sat down, and dug into that bag of Fritos. ■

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Cheryl Miller-Fitzgerald is a writer and journalist and the mother of twin teen boys; she is at work on her first novel.




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Good Memory?

In middle age, forget about it

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman

It happened daily, and I really thought there was something wrong with her—like seriously wrong.

I remember it clearly. My mother raced up the stairs as if she were an Olympian competing for gold. I heard her land on the top step, and then—nothing. A few seconds later, she descended the stairs, empty-handed, scratching her head. I didn't know that she suffered from CRS, and that someday, I too would fall ill to it:

Progressive CRS (Can't Remember Sh\$%) Disease

EARLY STAGES:

Noun Invasion

This is the beginning. The kids were little, sleep had pretty much gone by the wayside, and random nouns cluttered my brain. I wanted to scream for Laine, but for some reason, I had to call her Zach and Ethan first. It made me wonder if I should have just named all

of them Zach. And it's not just names, it's everything—places, objects. They all seemed to have several “pre” names now, the ones that come before my brain can grasp the real one. Ugh.

Thought Interruption

This stage started with a fully-formed thought that spurred an immediate action, followed quickly by disappearance of the entire thought.

For example: I have to pick a child up in about an hour, so I should return the shoes I bought at Target on my way to get her. I don't want to forget to do the return, so I better get it from upstairs right now and put it in the car. Between that thought, and walking toward the package, there were about six more thoughts—and by

the time I got to the stairs, it was unclear why I was there at all.

This phase lasted for a few years, and while it was annoying and exhausting (one run up the stairs eventually turns into two runs up and down the stairs, both of which left me baffled and empty-handed), it was a picnic compared to the stage to come.

Noun E-vasion

Husband: “We should rent that movie we've been wanting to see—I think it's available on demand now.”

Me: “Great. Which one?”

Husband: “You know, the one with the actor we like. He's married to the actress your dad likes.”

Me: *silence*

Husband: “Why are you looking at me like that?”

I wonder if he knows *my* name.

ADVANCED CRS:

Movie Repeats

Ah, we have arrived. Kids have their own plans. Cue up the movie and munch on the popcorn, all in the newfound quiet of our own home. About 25 minutes into the movie, I look at my husband and say, “Wait, didn't we see this one?” Yes, we did. He is as surprised as I am.

Mid-Sentence Topic Drop

Chatting away, hands motioning, I am telling the funniest story, and then—nothing. Absolutely nothing.

“I have no idea where I was going with this story.”

Friend tries to cue me: “Vacation, beach, book, sand.”

I stare back, blankly.

I feel like I am on the 1970s game show, Password. And not doing well at it.

“I've got nothing,” I reply.

MCCRS (Mid-Career CRS)

Print deadline approaching for *Your Teen*.

Didn't I just write an All About Me?

Oh! I have a great topic for this one.

Wait, what was the topic?



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