

INSPIRED PARENTING

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Emotional Intelligence

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A key to Whole Brain Learning, better sleep and ADD



The Secret to Raising Teens

Four Quick Tips to Stay Positive

BY CHARLENE PROCTOR, Ph.D.

What parent doesn't occasionally agonize over the challenges teenagers bring to a family environment? Because of raging hormones and the teen brain (I hear their frontal lobes are not fully developed, accounting for the lack of empathy) I long for the days when our sweet little dearies used to have fun on family vacations.

The day I gave up the fantasy that I'd skate through the teenage years I heard EVERYONE ELSE having (Me: "My boys will never turn into evil teens!! We're so close!") and chose hiding in the upstairs bathroom on a regular basis with my own television, I crossed over from denial into reality.

Mom from an alien galaxy

Reminiscing about the years when I was viewed as the smartest parent in the world was my official rite of passage. In my youngest son's eyes, I went from an intelligent, savvy, and socially competent parent to some sort of import from an alien galaxy where only fumbling fools were allowed to live. My job: never talk to him or his friends at a school function for fear of his future and mine. ("Mom you ruined my life! Don't ever talk to my friends again, it's soooo embarrassing!"). My eldest rejected every aspect of normal family life, opting to pursue studies that would prepare him to be a C.I.A. agent and sell antiquities on the side. Of course, he's made it clear he is never getting married.

Lately, I will admit my fantasies alternate between running away to a spiritual retreat for mothers of teenage boys and seeking revenge. I'd like to sneak into their rooms at night and lop off the hair they are convinced looks cooler than Zac Efron. The retreat scenario involves a guru who miraculously

grants me the patience to endure them both until they leave for college, where, of course, they realize nobody is going to do their laundry. Consequently, they have an epiphany about my contribution to their life.

In this fantasy I become a little grasshopper, completely centered in the eternal moment of now, returning home enhanced with boatloads of techniques guaranteed to establish my place in the world again. Being a positive thinker, it could happen if I keep practicing the Law of Attraction.

While cultivating (and encouraging!) their independence, teens need a lot of behind the scenes guidance in order to become good decision-makers. No matter what your teen's convoluted perception is of the world, it is important to show them that you are endeared by others.

My theory is that they will ask these people for advice at some point (because they won't ask you for any) and maybe your friends and work colleagues can slide in a few bonus compliments about you. It's also a survival technique when teens can't reciprocate a lot of love.

Also, show teens you can manage your own emotions and be a Vulcan when you need to be, capable of butting out of their lives completely, at least until they want the credit card.



Let's take comfort together right now. Teenager's needs are very different from little kids. We know we have to ride it out, and emanate competence and empowerment during the process, keeping a clear head and a sense of humor.

Here are four tips on raising teens. Thus far, I hope this advice is working in my own home (you can check with me in about three years):

- **PICK YOUR BATTLES.**

Teens are supposed to push the envelope. Let them, with well defined rules and consequences and don't worry so much about who seems to be winning the argument. Work hard to speak logically. Less is more. When you disagree, spend more time listening before delivering the final blow (No, you can't come to London with us in October for a weekend, you're supposed to be studying at college! No, you can't publish my personal email for profit! No, you can't sell the living room furniture on eBay!)

- **RESPECT THEIR PRIVACY.**

It tugs on your heartstrings when they don't spill everything right away. Give them their space, and let them know you are available when they need you, not when you need them. The most precious and productive moments are when they confide on their terms, not yours. Take advantage when they drop a transportation bomb shortly after you've sat down to vegetate in front of the tube after running errands all day. ("All my friends are going to the movies, can I please go too?") Use car time to share something important. Chances are they will spill their guts because they feel they owe you a favor. Of course, they will never admit it.

- **GROW WITH THEM.**

As they mature, you both have to relate on new terms. There's no



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manual or prep course for the daily angst. Give yourself permission to make mistakes as they make theirs. It's part of life! All perfectionists please note this phrase: Little kids, little problems. Big kids, bigger problems. As their strife gets larger, so will your patience and capacity to love. It's all part of the journey. And it won't resemble anything like the average sitcom.

- **MAKE YOUR HOME A SANCTUARY.**

Your home needs to be a loving, forgiving place where everyone feels safe. They'll bring their friends – and you'll always know where the party is. And never underestimate the power of food. Have a full fridge and let their friends feel comfortable helping themselves. Time spent gathered in the kitchen around any meal is an ancient invitation to share

something. Chances are, those will be among your greatest opportunities to pass on parental wisdom, cleverly disguised, of course.

Today's parents have an amazing level of responsibility. Do your best to get everyone on the same page. The family unit needs to work together! Teens should understand that parents also have goals and a gift to give the world outside of home. If you are fortunate to have a partner, show your teenagers what good partnership entails. I believe it's possible for everyone in a family to reach personal satisfaction and remain positive – no matter what planet we may reside on ■

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