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Shot on location at Aspire Fitness Studios in Beachwood, Ohio. Aspire offers unique personal training experiences in private, fully equipped studios.

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July-August 2016 Volume 8, Issue 6

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# EDITOR'S LETTER

When it comes to parenting, any day can be New Year's—with the feeling of a new start and the opportunity for resolutions. The first day of summer, the beginning of the school year, the end of a sporting season, etc.

I've picked many, many days to proclaim new systems. Unfortunately, most of my new initiatives have been unsustainable; some were never even implemented.

After reading Bruce Feiler's *The Secrets of Happy Families*, I was inspired to institute weekly family meetings. When I told my kids that we'd be meeting on Sundays, I ignored the eye rolls and whines. I set a time, made an agenda and looked forward to a new family tradition.

“Go for the big changes if you want, but the little ones can be easy to implement, less overwhelming and ultimately more sustainable.”

Monday morning, on the way to school, my son said, “What ever happened to our Sunday night meeting?” After all of my preparation, I had actually forgotten to gather the masses.

Family dinners are a must on the Borison Family manifesto. We all need to convene in order to process our days and bond as a unit—until there is a sporting event, a play, a meeting, a late work day and so on. We have dinner together every Friday night, but the rest of the week, well, we do our best.

Several years ago, I decided that we needed to clean our diet. I suggested (imposed) one week of a vegetarian diet. This was a big challenge for my meat-loving family. I prepared delicious and labor-intensive food. I felt like such a good mom.

But one week of vegetarian and not one kid was on board. So I gave up. (Full disclosure: I recently found out that they actually ate hamburgers when I wasn't home.)

In my house, although commitment to change comes year-round, my goals are often aspirational and mostly impossible to sustain.

I felt relieved when I read Diana Simeon's feature on Health and Wellness. She takes a very realistic approach to change, offering small, easy adjustments that can improve our families' lives. Go for the big changes if you want, but the little ones can be easy to implement, less overwhelming and ultimately more sustainable.

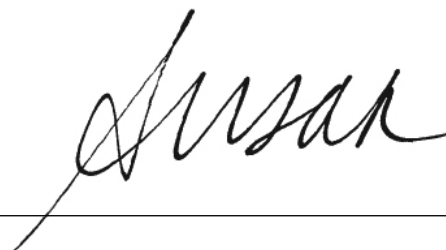
This issue also discusses dealing with our teens' social challenges. It's so hard not to feel pain as we watch our kids struggle with friendships. We hear over and over from parents who are suffering because of their kids' social hurts. And sometimes the pain is partnered with embarrassment because they feel alone with their worry.

In Snapshot and Perspectives, two moms share their personal stories and offer us a better way to understand our teenagers and ourselves, and to feel less alone in our worry. The feeling of wanting our children to fit in socially is universal, and thanks to Helen and Lisa, we can start to feel less embarrassed and more empowered to help our children navigate the murky waters of teenage relationships.

We've also added a new feature, Family Matters. In each issue, a parent, a teen, and an expert will share their opinions on a family matter. This one is about the chaotic mess that erupts in your house once school lets out.

We are looking forward to both a productive and relaxing summer. We wish the same for you.

Enjoy the Read!





They told him  
one hit  
wouldn't  
hurt...

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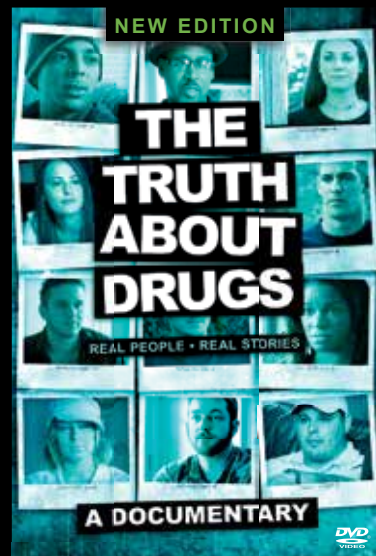
**YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE** is not a game of chance. Playgrounds and school yards have changed over the years: **60% of teens** report that drugs of some kind are kept, sold and used at their school.

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# FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



## JOHN DUFFY

We always love to have Dr. John Duffy in our pages. He's a Chicago-based psychologist, author of *The Available Parent*, and appears regularly on *The Steve Harvey Show* and NBC's *The Morning Blend*. This issue, Duffy offers advice for handling the mess of summer. Check it out on page 17.



## MERCEDES SAMUDIO, LCSW

We're welcoming a new expert, Mercedes Samudio, LCSW, a parenting coach based in Huntington Beach, CA. This issue, Samudio tackles the thorny topic of how to help teenagers who are struggling socially. Flip to page 27 to get started.



## PEGGY ORENSTEIN

We're thrilled to feature an interview with Peggy Orenstein, author of the just-released (and the must-read) *Girls & Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape* (page 18). Orenstein is also the author of the *New York Times* bestselling *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. You'll find her work in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Salon*, and many other places.



## CULLEN DOUGLAS

We love the hit television show *Scandal* and were delighted to talk with actor Cullen Douglas (page 54), who'll hit the big screen this summer in *The Dog Lover*. Douglas opens up about raising (and home-schooling) two teenagers, including a child with Down syndrome.

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**Time for Parents** Let us talk for a moment about the taking away of cellphones as a disciplining device. It's irresistible really isn't it? It's

the one thing a teenager will actually respond to. And in our modern and enlightened age when all the discipline techniques that our parents used on us have been deemed unsuitable, the phone is our last line of parental defense. So, it is with significant reluctance that I share with you this article suggesting that device removal—the punitive phonectomy, if you will—needs to be used judiciously. @YourTeenMag



**Betsy Johnson Hunroe** @bhunroe  
Outstanding, simple and should be required reading for parents of 13 year olds. @YourTeenMag



## #ParentHack

When my children were younger, they would come home from school, tell me about their day, and share all their secrets with me. I thought we would be best friends forever. I was so naïve and foolish.

All of a sudden, I noticed a shift. My children would come home from school, and the only answer to any of my questions was "Fine." More infuriating than their lack of communication was that they talked non-stop with their friends. I thought they had become sullen tweens, but it was only with me! I still wanted to know what was going on with their lives.

One day, while driving my daughter and her friend to a basketball game, I came up with a way to listen in on their tween lives. The two were sitting in the very back of my minivan whispering some fabulous secret to each other that I could not hear. There was a lot of arm waving and gesturing, so I knew it had to be a good story. I played with the speaker balance on the car radio so that the music was only playing in the back of the car. The front of the car was totally silent. They had to talk a bit louder to hear each other, and I could hear everything they said.

From then on whenever my children were in the car I changed the balance on my speakers to listen in. I never told them I did this. It was a great way to know what was happening in their lives. If there was anything I wanted to address later, I would start a conversation with, "I had lunch with a friend and she told me that XYZ is happening at school. Do you want to talk about it?"

A little bit sneaky, but quite effective. —Anonymous



# What Are You Doing to Be a "GREEN" TEEN?

I have a reusable water bottle that I take everywhere with me so that I don't waste plastic.

—Joanna, Pepper Pike, OH

Water is super expensive, thanks to California's drought, so taking short showers is a must. I take 5 minute showers with cold water!

—Miela, Oakland, CA

I make sure to always turn the lights off every time I leave a room. I also recycle anything that can be recycled.

—Anabelle, Philadelphia, PA

I take public transportation or walk everywhere I go. Where I live, public transportation is less expensive, faster, and more convenient than driving a car. And walking is great exercise.

—Stella, Berkeley, CA

I compost food scraps at home.

—Tara, Jericho, NY

I'm starting a community garden. Growing your own fruits and vegetables is not only super cost-efficient, it's environmental. Your food doesn't have to travel long distances to get to you!

—Fiona, San Rafael, CA



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GALLUP.COM



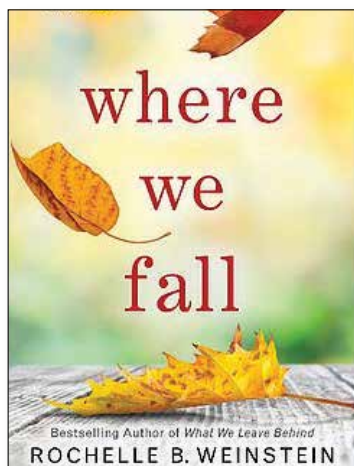
In 2016, only **13%** of American households with kids under 18 listed watching television as their favorite evening activity, a record low.

GALLUP.COM



**89%** of high school students say they rarely or never wear sunscreen of 15 SPF or higher when they are outside for more than an hour on a sunny day.

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL



# Great Summer Reads

By Ilene Neides

has on the lives of the main characters.

Weinstein's use of alternating narrators gives the reader a chance to see the story slowly unfold through different lenses. The author introduces us to Lauren, a reclusive, artistic photographer/author devastated by her best friend's betrayal; Ryan, the ever-loyal husband, father, and beloved high school football coach who inspires his players both on the field and off; Juliana, an independent but struggling teenage daughter; and Abby, the

woman who has kept a secret since her college days.

As we slowly come to know these characters, the reader has a front row seat observing how depression and self-doubt plague Abby and her troubled mind. Weinstein's beautifully relatable metaphors of waterfalls, important life lessons, and depictions of the price we pay for love are just a few of the topics discussed in this wise and insightful book. It is a worthwhile read. ■

Ever wonder what your life might have been like if you had just [fill in the blank]? In Rochelle B. Weinstein's new novel, *Where We Fall*, we see the consequences and effects of choices made and not made by three close college friends. This compelling read addresses depression and the ripple effect it

## Your Teen Staff Recommends...

### *The Historian*

by Elizabeth Kostova

### *Lord of the Rings*

by J.R.R. Tolkien

### *The Name of the Wind*

by Patrick Rothfuss

### *Bartimaeus trilogy*

by Jonathan Stroud

### *The Hunger Games*

by Suzanne Collins

### *Matched*

by Allyson Condie

### *Divergent*

by Veronica Roth

### *Wonder*

by Rael Palacio

### *To Kill A Mockingbird*

by Harper Lee

### *The Book Thief*

by Markus Zusak

### *The Art of Racing in the Rain*

by Garth Stein

### *Running out of Time*

by Margaret Peterson Haddix

### *Just Juice*

by Karen Hesse



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# Products Picks

Kid-tested and parent-approved,  
*Your Teen* recommends...

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## Sleeping In this Summer?

Ahhh, summer. No more yelling at our teenagers to get out of bed already! We can just go ahead and stash the alarm clock in the closet for the next three months, right? Well, maybe not so fast. Chances are your teenager will still need to be up in the morning, whether it's for camp, a class, work, or whatever other structured activities he's got planned. So, we turned to Dr. Sasha Carr, a psychologist and certified sleep consultant. Here's her advice.

**1 It's okay to be more relaxed.** Most teenagers need to be at school early in the morning, which means for nine months of the year, they're not able to sleep in a way that suits them biologically, says Carr. "When they hit puberty, teenagers experience a shift in their circadian rhythm," she explains. "The hormones that help teenagers fall asleep kick in later in the evening and the hormones that help them wake up kick in later in the morning." Summer can be a time to let teenagers enjoy their natural sleep cycle. "If their schedule allows it, I don't see any real harm in letting them sleep in longer over the summer," says Carr.

**2 Set up your teenager for sleep success any time of year.** Carr recommends parents still stick with guidelines that encourage healthy sleep, like no technology after bedtime. "We know that teenagers who go to sleep with a phone or any device near their bed get about 45 minutes less sleep a night," says Carr, who's also founder of Off to Dreamland. By the way, that's also the case for adults.

**3 Get back to a school schedule a couple of weeks early.** Especially if your teenager has gotten into the habit of staying up late and sleeping in over the summer, be proactive about moving his sleep clock back well before the first day, recommends Carr. "I recommend getting back into a reasonable schedule about two weeks before school starts, so it's not a shock to the system."

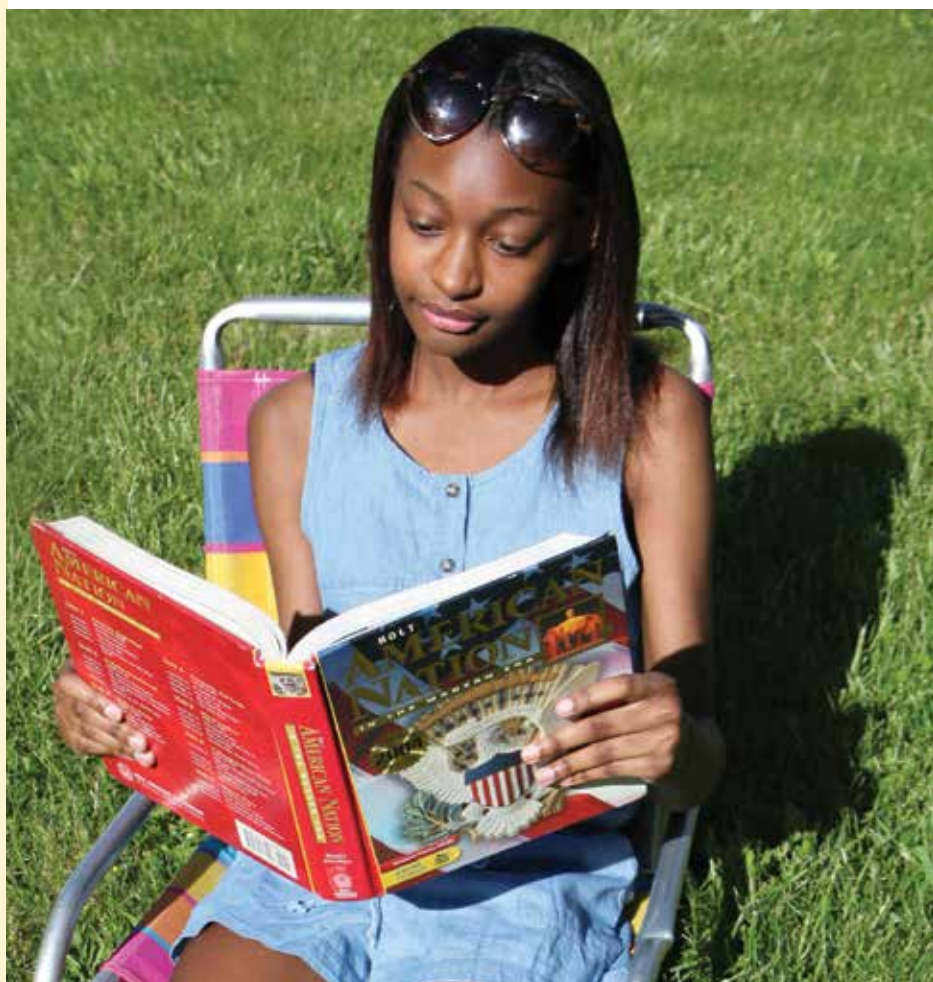
## The Dreaded Summer Assignments

No more pencils, no more books! Well, not exactly. Summer homework—unheard of when most parents were in high school—is the norm these days, mostly thanks to Advanced Placement or other college-level classes now common on high school campuses. Even middle school students now have assigned reading lists and math packets to complete. How can you help your teenager avoid procrastinating until August and complete those summer assignments—without ruining your family's summer? Here are some tips.

**Make a shared calendar.** "Before summer starts, I recommend parents and the student sit down and map out a shared calendar," says Cathryn Sloane of Varsity Tutors, a private tutoring

company. Whether it is a physical or digital calendar, together map out commitments. Block out family vacation, sports camps, theater camp, or practice—whatever extracurriculars or weekly engagements your student has. Make sure the calendar is something that you can both see every day as a good visual cue and reminder. A grace period at the beginning of summer is a good idea. "A little time off helps avoid burnout, gives your brain a break, and actually helps a student to feel refreshed and motivated when it's time to start up again," says Sloane.

**Set deadlines.** Once you can see what commitments you already have, count the number of weeks remaining before school starts. Big projects or concrete deadlines can be overwhelming, so



Photos: Beth Segal



break them up into mini-deadlines. If it's a reading assignment, for example, make mini-deadlines to have four chapters of this book finished by this date. Set up reminders in advance so the student has notice of any upcoming deadlines. Help your teen stay on track with progress markers. "The best way to avoid procrastination," advises Sloane, "is to have a good idea of what you have to do, because if you are overwhelmed, it's harder to get started."

**Encourage goals.** Let your student set his or her own goals. "Parents should be aware and involved in setting up deadlines," says Sloane, "but your son or daughter should have a voice in that discussion." Specific goals should come from the student and reflect what the child responds to best.

**Don't micromanage.** Nagging or policing can be counterproductive. "Older students have the maturity and capabil-

ity to manage their summer work themselves and should be encouraged to do it themselves," Sloane says. "Summer is a great time to work on those time management skills." Parents should have some limited involvement, however, to ensure that teens avoid any serious negative consequences. ■

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## MOVE-OUT SKILLS 101: Home Emergencies

**T**oilets overflow, faucets leak, grease fires happen. Sometimes you have to act quickly—before there's time to call the landlord or mom and dad. Does your son or daughter know what to do?

### OVERFLOWING TOILET

Your teen should know how to find the shutoff valve. On the pipe coming out of the wall behind the toilet, locate the water valve and turn it clockwise. If there is no shutoff, remove the tank lid on the back of the toilet and find the ball/float. Lift up the ball while someone else turns the water off at the main water shutoff. To prevent water from refilling the tank, wedge something under the ball.

### LEAKING WATER

Water can cause a lot of damage quickly. Look for the shutoff valve closest to the fixture that's leaking. Turn clockwise to turn off all the water. Some appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, or re-

frigerators may have a water shutoff switch on the body of the appliance or on the hose that connects to the wall. If you cannot locate this valve, find the main water shutoff valve to cut off the stream of water into the home. The main shutoff is usually located in the basement or part of the house closest to where the water pipes enter the house from the outside.

### GAS LEAK

With a gas leak, seconds count. If there is a strong odor similar to rotten eggs, or a roaring or hissing sound coming from a gas appliance, leave immediately and take everyone in the room with you. Do not light a match, smoke, or turn appliances or lights on, as doing so can produce sparks that might cause the gas to explode. Call the power company or landlord when you are away from the area.

### HOW TO FLIP A CIRCUIT

If the power goes off or an

appliance does not have any power, the breaker may have flipped and you will need to reset it. A breaker is a switch that turns off the flow of electric current, and it is located in the circuit panel. Turn off the lights and all appliances in the room. Locate the circuit panel, which will be a metal box mounted on the wall either in the garage, utility room or other accessible location. Look for a breaker that has moved from the On to the Off position, or is halfway between the two. Turn the breaker fully to the Off position, then flip to the fully On position. If the power doesn't come back on, try flipping it off and on again. If the breaker shuts off again, you have a short or some other problem that needs to be fixed before

you attempt to switch it on again. At this point, it's time to call the landlord or electrician.

### GREASE FIRE

If you have a fire in the oven, turn the oven off and keep the oven door closed. The lack of oxygen will suffocate the flames. If your oven continues to smoke, a fire may still be going on in there. Call the fire department. If you have a fire in a cooking pan, use an oven mitt to clap on the lid, then move the pan off the burner, and turn off the stove. The lack of oxygen will stop the flames in a pot. If you can't safely put the lid on a flaming pan, use a fire extinguisher. Never use water to put out grease fires! Water repels grease and can spread the fire by splattering the grease. ■



# Sloppy Joes Pulled Beef Tacos

Tacos? Pulled beef? And Sloppy Joes? Every hungry teen you know will think this meal is three of their favorites rolled up into one. This delicious, easy recipe from Susie Fishbein's, newly-released *Kosher By Design Brings It Home* is sure to be a hit. "Pulled barbecue beef is all the rage right now in America," says Fishbein. "Smoking meat is a process too arduous for a home-cook's easy dinner repertoire. I wrote this recipe to stand in for a simple Sloppy Joe saucy version of a pulled-beef sandwich. I love to wrap the leftovers in a flour tortilla with shredded lettuce, rice, and beans and eat them at room-temperature for lunch the next day."

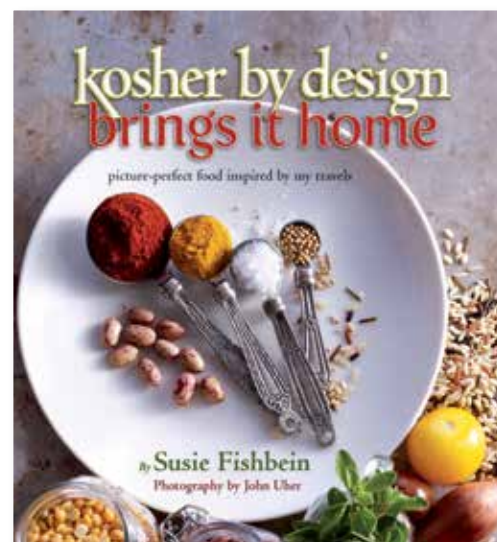


## INGREDIENTS:

2-3 lbs second-cut brisket, cut into 3 chunks  
 ½ Tsp fine sea salt  
 ½ Tsp freshly ground black pepper  
 1 carrot, peeled, cut into ¼-inch dice  
 ½ medium onion, peeled, cut into ¼-inch dice  
 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, with liquid  
 1 Tsp cumin  
 1 Tsp dried oregano  
 1 Tsp garlic powder  
 2 Tbsp dark brown sugar  
 3 Tbsp ketchup  
 2 Tbsp yellow mustard  
 8 taco shells  
 1 can Sloppy Joe sauce, warmed ("I like Manwich")

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°
2. Season the chunks of brisket on both sides with salt and pepper. Place into a 9 x 13-inch oven-to-table casserole dish into which the meat fits snugly.
3. Sprinkle the carrot and onion over the top.
4. Spread an even layer of the tomatoes with their liquid over the top.
5. In a small bowl, combine the cumin, oregano, and garlic powder. Stir in the brown sugar, ketchup, and mustard. Spoon over the top to distribute evenly.
6. Cover the dish; bake for 3 hours.
7. Transfer the meat to a cutting board, reserving pan juices. Using two forks, shred the beef. Return the meat to the dish, using pan juices to keep the meat moist.
8. Fill the taco shells with the beef; drizzle with warm Sloppy Joe sauce.





# Summer Slobs

Ideas for handling the mess of summer

## PARENT

Oh, summer. Freedom from alarms, making school lunches, homework. Instead, I drift lazily through the halcyon days of summer with my three precious reasons for living.



That euphoria usually lasts about three days. My teens, as it turns out, eat like Hobbits and are complete slobs who celebrate the end of the routine and constraints of school by jettisoning even minimal standards of cleanliness. By Day 4, I've noticed that there are more dirty dishes on the kitchen counter—even though I just cleaned up the last set 15 minutes ago. Every morning, the family room looks like it got hit by a tornado: ice cream dishes, dirty socks, empty Gatorade bottles next to pooling red stains, and popsicle sticks dropped casually onto the nest of blankets left on the sofa. Everything smells like dirty feet.

To prevent me from going all Joan Crawford on them, the kids and I have reached a compromise. You can live in filth in your own rooms, but your bedroom doors stay shut (so I can't see in), and the rooms we all use stay reasonably tidy. Put your dishes in the dishwasher. Wash the egg pan after you use it. Basically: clean up your own mess. I make a conscious effort to relax a little and be good-humored about a little disorder; they try to remember to clean up without being asked. After all, school will start up again all too soon. And when it's a little too clean and a little too quiet around here, I will miss those slovenly darlings. —*Jane Parent*

## TEEN



Things (I mean my mom) can get a little crazy when my siblings come home for the summer. The normal routine breaks down, and things start to become a bit of a mess. Suddenly, there are packed bags and storage bins in the middle of the living room.

The upstairs hallway is impassable because of all my brother's laundry baskets and trash bags full of towels and clothes. I can't find my sneakers under the growing mountain of shoes by the back door. There's nowhere to sit in the family room without moving a lot of stuff. It's great to see everyone home, but it does take a few days to adjust to the presence of my siblings after being the only kid in the house for the majority of the year.

My family deals with this by having a common understanding: everyone does their part to clean up the "public" areas where everyone in the family spends time, such as the family room or the kitchen. We do our best to put away our dishes, throw away dirty napkins, and generally keep things clean. No one wants to have to deal with another person's banana peel, dirty sock, or leftover lunch. You take care of your own mess before someone has to tell you to. Having said that, yes, we forget and are occasionally, well, lazy.

However, all bets are off when it comes to your personal space. In your room, you are the king or queen of your very own domain, and its state of cleanliness or chaos is left completely up to you. A closed door is a signal that it's just better for everyone to avoid entry. —*Charlie Parent*

## ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT



In my field, we often think poor grades or a bad attitude can derail a family. But oftentimes, the disarray in the home that comes with the summer months can be the cause of family chaos and stress. Though our stated goal may be to spend time with the family in the cocoon of the home, the reality often feels like too much togetherness, too many screen-illuminated faces, and way, way too much stuff, everywhere.

I think the difference between public and private areas of the home is particularly useful here. For private areas like bedrooms and, in some homes, basements or dens, a parent closing a door and ignoring the mess is the most viable solution—and the least likely to drive unnecessary conflict. I also

find that some of the messiest kids reach a tipping point after which they cannot handle their own dishes sitting in their room for even one more day. The caveat here is the degree of gross-ness. Mom and Dad are allowed to draw the line here.

The care and cleaning of the home needs to be a family affair. It cannot and should not fall on one parent or one child. Delineating the roles and chores early in the game is recommended.

At the end of the day, a little mess is inevitable. If we choose every battle, that will become the story of the summer—not a particularly memorable story to tell. I'd rather have a sink full of dirty dishes for a while, if it means a connected family engaged with one another. —*Dr. John Duffy*

# Peggy Orenstein Talks *Girls & Sex*



Photo: Michael Todd

In many ways, the way we talk about sex with our teenagers hasn't changed much from the way our parents talked with us when we were teenagers. But it's time to update the conversation, says Peggy Orenstein, the author *Girls & Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape*. We recently caught up with Orenstein—also the author of the bestselling *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*—to find out more.

**In your book, you write about a study comparing sexual behavior in Dutch and American teenagers. Can you briefly explain the results of the study?**

Dutch parents, teachers, and doctors talk very openly to young people about sex. One of the biggest differences is that while American and Dutch parents are equally comfortable talking about sex, American parents stress risk and danger exclusively, while Dutch parents talk about those things, but also about the pleasures of sex, masturbation, orgasms, and communicating with your partner.

**How did those different approaches impact their daughters?**

All of the negative outcomes are reduced among the Dutch compared to the Americans. So having sex drunk or getting pregnant, for example—both are way

lower among the Dutch. Meanwhile, all the positive outcomes, like feeling control over the experience, feeling that you could communicate with your partner, knowing your partner very well, feeling pleasure in the encounter, feeling good about your body—all those things that we want for girls—were way better among the Dutch.

**What should parents take away from these studies?**

I thought, previously, that if I talked to my daughter about contraception, disease prevention, and consent, that my job was done. Now I know that I have to shift the discussion. In Dutch families, kids are supposed to mature within the family unit. They talk about sex openly, which allows parents to exert what sociologist Amy Schalet called “soft control”: they can use those occasions to reinforce val-

ues, ethics, care, all those things. I was deeply moved by that; I thought—these conversations are not scary, horrible, or embarrassing, but rather an opportunity to connect with our children and be closer with them as they mature.

**Many of the girls you interviewed described sex as painful, humiliating, even demeaning.**

Yes, in research when girls talk about bad sex, they used those words: painful, humiliating, degrading, demeaning, depressing. And boys in the research never used those words; bad sex for them was not having an orgasm or being too drunk to get it up. But it's never painful, humiliating, degrading, demeaning; those are specifically words that girls use. And girls report pain 30 percent of the time in their most recent sexual encounters that included vaginal

intercourse and 70 percent of the time if it included anal intercourse. Also, according to research, girls are more likely than boys to use their partner's pleasure as the measure of their satisfaction. “He's satisfied so I'm satisfied.” Whereas boys are more likely to measure satisfaction by their own pleasure. They'll say, “I had an orgasm so I was satisfied.” If, then, girls go into an experience thinking, “I hope this feels good, I hope he has an orgasm, I hope it doesn't hurt, I hope I'm not humiliated,” then they will be satisfied if those conditions are met. Which may be why in research young women tend to report equal satisfaction rates to young men.

**It sounds like many of the girls you interviewed don't feel a sense of entitlement when it comes to sex?**

In the book, I talk about “intimate justice,” a phrase



coined by a psychologist at the University of Michigan. It's the idea that, just like who washes the dishes in your house has a political dimension, so does sex. Intimate justice asks: who is entitled to engage in a sexual experience, who is entitled to enjoy it, who is its primary beneficiary, and what "good enough" means for each partner.

#### **We hear a lot about hookup culture. What's your take?**

The hookup culture is about feeling-less sex. Young people do that by getting drunk; otherwise they might "catch feelings," as if it's a disease. Not caring is the ultimate goal. It wasn't my job to say the "correct" context in which girls should have sex, but I did want them to understand what they were likely or not likely to get out of a hookup. They are likely to get an adrenaline rush, an adventure, a war story, a warm body. But they should know they are a lot less likely to get good sex, or the tools they'll need to create either good sex or intimacy.

#### **Do you think that the hookup culture automatically disadvantages girls?**

I don't want to treat girls as victims and the way we traditionally talked about casual sex risks stigmatiz-

ing girls. There were girls who came in, sat down and said, "I love the hookup culture. Don't treat me as a victim; I'm doing this for me. I don't want to be in a relationship. I want to focus on myself and my friends, and I want to have sex, and this is how I'm doing it." I just want girls to know what the hookup culture looks like. And I want parents to understand so we can educate our kids to have experiences that are safe, responsible, ethical, reciprocal, and enjoyable.

#### **What about boys?**

There are also many boys who would like to be in a relationship. A professor I followed surveyed 120 male and female students in her classes. When she asked whether they thought their peers were interested in relationships, nearly all said no, their peers just wanted to hookup. But when she asked, "Well what about you?" the vast majority said they did want a relationship. So there was a disconnect between what people imagined others wanted versus what they actually did want.

#### **Where do we start? The idea of talking about sex the way the Dutch do will be challenging for many American parents.**

On one hand, I can tell you

if you practice, if you start, it will get easier. And using interviews like this one as a jumping off point, or books like mine, is great. But if you really can't do it—ask a girlfriend, an aunt, or whomever. I have a friend who thought her daughter was considering having intercourse, so she wanted me to talk to her. I took her to lunch. Was it uncomfortable? Yes. I wanted the floor to open up and swallow me. But I did it.

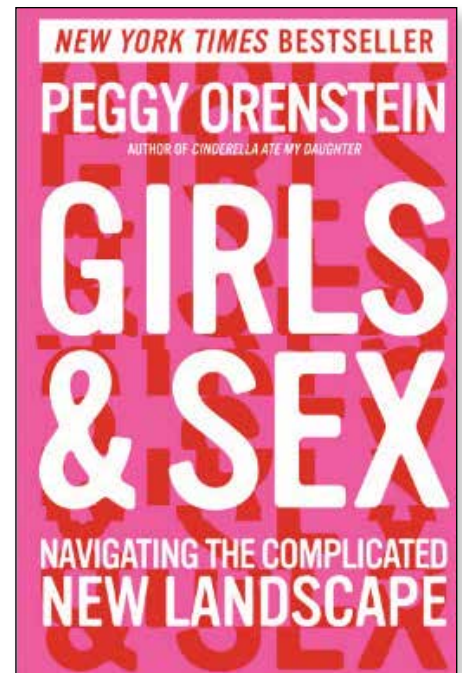
I said, "Look, I know that you're thinking about this," and we talked about protection, and all that. I asked her questions but didn't expect answers. Have you masturbated? Have you had an orgasm on your own? Do you feel comfortable talking to your partner about what you want and don't want and how far you want to go? If you answer 'no' to any of these questions, what do you want out of intercourse? How do you think about creating a mutual, reciprocal, satisfying, communicative, caring, sexual relationship? She didn't say much. But years lat-

er, we still talk all the time and when she has concerns about her sex life, work, school, or whatever, she calls me

#### **Do you think *Girls & Sex* will change the conversation?**

I wrote *Girls & Sex* in part to inspire conversation between parents and their high school or college-age daughters. If your daughter reads it and doesn't want to talk about it, she is still getting information that will challenge what she is learning in popular culture that will potentially shift how she behaves and what she thinks about sex. ■

*Interview by Susan Borison*



# *The Beastkeeper* by Cat Hellisen

Fast-paced, charming, and thrilling, say our reviewers

## ADULT REVIEW

By **Jeff Kleinman**

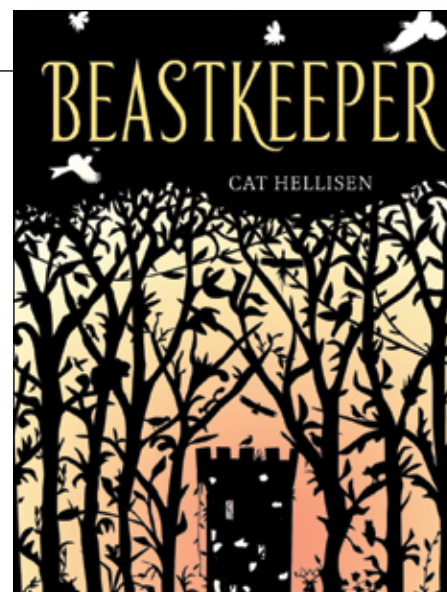
**W**hat would it be like to be affected by a family curse? There you are, perfectly innocent, going to school and worrying about biology or whether you should eat that chocolate-covered doughnut, when all of a sudden, through absolutely no fault of your own, you find that your whole family is cursed. Every family member has been turned into a huge, mindless, unnamable beast, and you will too as soon as you fall in love. This is exactly what Sarah struggles with in Cat Hellisen's *The Beastkeeper*.

The novel is a fun, easy read, with a likeable protagonist. Sarah's a feisty, cool 13-year-old who often seems and acts much wiser than her peers. When her mother suddenly and unaccount-

ably leaves her and her father, she's devastated but immediately learns to cope. Then her father starts acting more and more oddly: eating sandwiches with a fat layer of raw meat. He's turning into a monster.

Before the transformation is complete, however, he drops Sarah off for safekeeping at her grandparents' home—although her father never told her that his parents were alive. Maybe this wasn't the best place to protect her, though: her grandmother lives alone with a talking, white raven. Her grandfather, fully and finally transformed into a beast, is locked in a shed out back. Soon her father is gone, and it's up to Sarah to unravel what's going on.

She quickly becomes aware of the curse—jealous jilted lovers throwing magical scourges at each other. Falling



in love, Sarah learns, will doom her. She'll end up like her father, now a monster, roaming the forest and preying on the locals. When a mysterious handsome boy named Alan tries to help Sarah, she's in even more dire straits, now one step closer to falling in love—and turning into a beast herself.

Fast-paced and charming, this is an effortless novel to devour and enjoy. Despite the sometimes confusing backstory, slightly muddled plot—and an ending that felt a bit forced and rushed—this is definitely a novel worth reading. I sure hope the author is working on the sequel.

*Jeff Kleinman is Cory's father and splits his time between Virginia and New York City.*

## TEEN REVIEW

By **Cory Kleinman**

**T**he *Beastkeeper* is the story of a girl whose family has been put under a curse and she, too, is in danger of falling victim to it. A strange tale of family, jealousy, and love, Cat Hellisen's novel follows the young, charming heroine Sarah as she journeys into the wild woods.

Sarah has always liked the woods, and after her mother left, it was the place where she found refuge. As Sarah discovers the motivations behind her mother's sudden departure, she notices odd changes in her father's behavior—he's becoming more distant and involved in his work, and he now likes raw meat on his sandwiches. Could it be that Dad has succumbed to the curse and is becoming a beast?

This courageous and spirited teenager is forced to confront the difficult emotions of love and fear as she, too, faces the possibility of becoming a beast and losing her humanity.

After Sarah's mom walks out, abandoning her husband and child, Sarah's father drops her off with her grandmother and grandfather. Immediately, Sarah notices that her grandfather is already a beast, complete with fur and horns. While living with her grandmother, Sarah learns more about the curse as she discovers the tangled web of jealousy that her grandmother spun years before.

Sarah struggles to comprehend her feelings for the strange, handsome boy

in the woods. He helps her on her quest to reunite her crazy, magical family and to break the curse which threatens to destroy her and all members of her family. When she meets the snow-white raven who drops hints about her grandparents' mysterious past, Sarah's curiosity is piqued and she goes out looking for adventure and a solution to the curse.

This thrilling novel is definitely exciting to read despite being sometimes complex and rushed in certain places. I'd definitely recommend it.

*Cory is a junior at Wakefield School in The Plains, Virginia.*



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# Practical Tips for College Admissions Testing



**T**ake note, parents of rising juniors: Summer is a great time to encourage teenagers to start prepping for this fall's SAT or ACT. "They are out of school, and even if they are going to camp or working, there is still a lot of time to study on their own, work with a tutor, or take a class," explains Sarolta Brooks, executive director of the Princeton Review, a leading provider of test-prep services. Here's how you can get started.

**What's the time frame for testing?** Teenagers have multiple opportunities to take both the ACT and SAT during their junior year, but many elect to take one or both tests in the fall, using the summer to get ready. "The biggest benefit of testing early junior year is, hopefully, you only need to take it once, and then you can just focus on academics for the rest of the year," says Brooks. "But if you do need to take it again, the test is offered many more times during the year." The ACT and SAT are offered six times a year: twice in the fall, twice in the winter, and twice in the spring. Note that you'll want to make sure your teenager has at a minimum taken Geometry and Algebra, so if your student is taking either of those courses junior year, consider testing later.

**Which test to take?** Colleges accept either the SAT or the ACT and do not favor one over the other, so it's really up to your student. An easy way to figure out which test is a better match for your teen is to "take a full-length practice test [for each of the two options] and see how you do," says Brooks. "Did one feel easier than the other? Did the portion on the SAT where you could not use a calculator stress you out?" Also, if your student took the PSAT (the pre-SAT) or the Aspire (the pre-ACT), those scores can be predictive of how she will do on the SAT or ACT.

**How to get ready?** Parents should encourage teenagers to start preparing a minimum of a month before they plan to take the test, recommends Brooks, adding that many students

prepare much longer than that. That's because your teenager won't work at it every day, especially during the school year, and they'll need time to take practice tests and also to focus on problem areas. What not to do: "Cram the night before, get no sleep, and take the test when you're tired."

**There are a variety of ways to prepare for the test, so be sure to pick what works for your particular teenager.**

Some are able to study on their own, using books or online resources. For example, The College Board and Khan Academy have teamed up to offer a library of free materials to help your teenager prepare for the SAT. But other students need more support. "We have everything from books that are meant to be self study guides, to online programs, classes, even private tutoring," says Brooks. One-on-one tutoring can be an especially helpful way to get your teenager the targeted help he needs with, say, geometry, but students who need to brush up on multiple areas of the test may get more out of a class.

**The bottom line:** "The more students put into it, the more they'll get out of it," says Brooks, adding that even bolstering a score by just a few percentage points can make a difference in the types of colleges students can apply to, not to mention the potential merit awards awaiting them. ■



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# Could it be a Learning Disability? Know Your Rights



**T**oday, about two million students in the United States have been diagnosed as learning disabled. While most students with learning disabilities are identified by third grade, it's not uncommon to be identified in middle school or sometimes even high school. And while the earlier a student gets help with a disability the better, it's never too late to get a student on the path to educational success.

We asked Cleveland-area attorney Daniel M. Margolis, who has focused on education law for more than 15 years, for an overview of what parents should know.

## 1. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.

Students can struggle in school for a variety of reasons, and there isn't one exact sign to indicate that your student may be struggling as a result of a learning disability. But if your student has ongoing difficulty with an academic area or skill—say, reading comprehension or memory skills—that could be a red flag. Parents should trust their instincts, stresses Margolis. “Nobody knows a child better than a parent, and there will be times when a parent will notice a change in a child over the course of a school year,” he notes. “They may also start hearing from a teacher that their child is acting out. Parents should key in on that and start asking appropriate questions.”

## 2. UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS.

Every child in the United States is guaranteed what's called a Free Appropriate Public Education (or FAPE). That means that if a student has any kind of disability, a school must provide whatever services he needs to be successful. “It doesn't matter how profound the disability is,” explains Margolis. “This is something that is absolutely guaranteed to every child, and the public school district in which the family lives is responsible for providing that education.” Students with identified disabilities—learning or something else like a physical challenge or ADHD—should have either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan.

## 3. ASK FOR AN EVALUATION.

Ideally, the request for an evaluation—which includes reviewing a student's record, as well as observations, testing, and interviews—will come from your student's school. “But sometimes the onus is on the parent to say to the school district, ‘My child needs to be evaluated for these reasons.’” Parents have a legal right to request an evaluation for their student, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Note that this applies only to public schools; private schools are generally not obligated to evaluate or provide services for students with disabilities.

## 4. KNOW WHEN TO GET LEGAL HELP.

Unfortunately, there can be times when parents find a school district resistant to providing the services they believe their child needs. When it happens, it's typically a student with a severe disability who requires an exceptional level of service, sometimes at a specialized school, which the district must pay for. “This is where the struggle becomes very real and litigation can ensue,” explains Margolis. “For example, there are times when it's better to educate a child with autism in a setting that is specially developed for children with autism, but costs upwards of \$100,000 a year. Oftentimes, school districts will say, ‘We don't need to spend that kind of money.’ So that is where there will be a struggle between the parents and the school and legal help may be required.” ■



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Perspectives reflects the full tapestry of our society: from parents, teens and professionals.

# Feeling Unpopular

Photo: Beth Segal

## Teen

By Anne Nickoloff

When I arrived at high school, I was already a geek.

I wore old Science Olympiad t-shirts from junior high, spoke with a slightly dorky lisp, and actually studied during study hall. On my very first day of class, I walked into the building with a sunburnt face and arms, courtesy of marching band camp.

Other kids noticed these things, and I could tell.

Whether kids were mocking my voice or teasing me about my nerdiness, I dealt with some light taunting in high school and a lot of feeling left out. There was a clear divide between those who were popular and those who were not.

Much like the high school “types” in *The Breakfast Club*, popular students talked the talk and walked the walk. They also wore the right clothes, from American Eagle or Hollister, and participated in the right extracurriculars, like sports.

Being popular didn’t mean a student was a bully; most conventionally popular people I met were very nice. However, when I was a freshman in high school, it did feel a little like being popular was being a part of an exclusive club.

And gaining entrance to that club wasn’t always easy. I knew a kid who purposefully got B’s and C’s on tests to avoid being mocked for getting straight A’s. I knew students who stayed in bad relationships to avoid losing a group of popular friends and students who spent exorbitant amounts of money to buy t-shirts with small bird logos on them.

At first it was intimidating. During lunch, cliques of different kinds of students filled table seats. For four straight years, I sat with the band nerds who became some of my best friends. But at the beginning, I was scared of going through school at the bottom of the social ladder.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Teen



Anne Nickoloff

Parent



Helen Chibnik

Professional



Mercedes Samudio, LCSW

*“Just extend an invitation instead of waiting to be asked,” I said.*

*“Isn’t there even one club you like?”*

I would eat in silence, laughing at other peoples’ jokes without making any of my own. I was afraid of talking to upperclassmen, afraid of embarrassing myself. My social anxiety prevented me from being too social during that first year.

But eventually, I was able to make friends with people who were like me. We weren’t as outgoing as the cheerleaders and the football players who talked to each other in the hallways, but we would discuss our favorite books and our plans for college.

I forced myself to join extracurriculars that I enjoyed, like marching band, theater, ski club, and academic team. Soon, I made more friends just by showing up to meetings and practices, friends that I still have to this day. After my freshman year passed, I found that I had a big group of friends who were similar to me.

That social ladder I’d imagined was deconstructed. When I became an upperclassman, I finally understood that being popular wasn’t equated with being a certain kind of person. It was more about being myself.

*Anne Nickoloff is a recent graduate of Case Western Reserve University.*

## Parent

By Helen Chibnik

I waited with growing excitement to hear all about my daughter’s first day of high school.

“Well?” I said. “How was it?”

“It was OK,” she said.

“Who did you eat lunch with?” I asked.

“I ate alone, Mom,” she replied, and

went straight to her room while my heart sank deep into my abdomen.

“Look for a friendly face, and ask if it would be okay to sit down,” was my advice as she left for school the next day. She did ultimately find lunch-mates, but the kids at the table repeatedly made plans and didn’t invite her.

What could I do? I was her mother after all. I should be able to fix this. I imagined that every day behind her closed bedroom door she was crying with despair into her pillow.

I blamed myself for her lack of community at school. Academically she was fine, but she didn’t have a peer group, and I couldn’t stop thinking that we had made a terrible mistake by not sending her to a tiny private school instead of the local middle school. I lamented over the choice we made, but I couldn’t go back and change it. At the end of Week One, I sat down and wept to my husband.

“I should have at least made her stay with soccer or softball,” I cried. “This way she’d have teammates to be friends with.”

“She’ll be fine,” he said. “Give her some time.”

How did he know she’d be fine? Where was the proof? My own anxiety was taking over. I revisited every moment leading up to her first day. *I should have let her buy that overpriced top she wanted. That would have sparked a conversation beginning with, “I love your shirt! Where did you get it?”*

I wanted her to be popular, and instead, she had no friends, no group where she fit in, and no idea of how to find one in this big school. Since I blamed myself for the situation, I felt I had to fix it.

“Just extend an invitation instead of waiting to be asked,” I said. “Isn’t there even one club you like? What about the school play? You should do that.”

My eagerness to help was only adding to her anxiety. “Mom,” she said, “please stop trying to fix this! It’s all we ever talk about anymore!”

“But I’m on your side,” I told her. “I just want to help.”

“Then stop,” she said.

She wanted me to stop and do nothing? I’m not a do-nothing kind of person. Every nerve ending in my body resisted the idea, but I had become part of the problem instead of the solution.

What now? Research! Every resource I found said the same thing. Just be there for them; don’t try to fix things.

Watching her sit in an uncomfortable place and not trying to help felt harder than chewing off my own fingers. I checked her social media like crazy for any sign of progress, or for depression. I needed evidence that she would be okay. I struggled to let her stay in her room after school. I kept thinking: *I should check on her, make sure she’s happy, feed her, do something! How can we do nothing? My daughter has no friends!*

Weeks went by, and I found that having weekend plans for all of us was the best idea. It was far better to tell her that we had a fun thing to do on Saturday afternoon than to ask if she had plans and force her to discuss her empty calendar. After a month or so, she came home from school energized instead of drained. “One of the kids in my art class loved this ring I made,” she said. “I told her I’d make her one.”

I went right out to the craft store and bought her whatever she wanted. And I will never forget her voice when she said, “Mom, I got invited to a birthday party.” It felt like the first time I exhaled in over a month. What relief! She was included. It was going to be okay.

So what if she didn’t play a sport or didn’t try out for the school play? She





Photo: Beth Segal

would never be happy if she wasn't true to herself, and those things were on my agenda, not hers. She had found a place. It happened slowly, but on her terms, not mine.

A sympathetic ear, a shoulder, and a hug are all she really needed from me. I still slip and offer unsolicited advice sometimes. After all, that is my true self, and she finds a way to let me be me. Who would have guessed that understanding each other's needs would be a nice and unexpected side effect of a lousy start to her freshman year.

*Helen Chibnik is a music teacher, freelance writer, and mom to three teenagers living in New Jersey. Follow her on Twitter @helensgoodideas.*

## Professional

By Mercedes Samudio, LCSW

It's hard to resist the temptation—in the name of “helping”—to try to micromanage your teen's social life. You might feel anxious if she is left out, or worry if he's following the wrong crowd. You want to make their decisions for them so they don't fail, but you also want your kids to think for themselves.

These conflicting feelings are totally normal. The challenging part is managing them. When your teen tells you that she feels unpopular (or you suspect that she is experiencing this), it's integral to her development into a well-adjusted

adult that you guide and support her in finding her confidence and social identity, without totally taking the reins.

Here are two strategies that I recommend to parents who are trying to support teens through these social challenges.

### 1. Let Them Feel

Instead of trying to make it all better, take a step back and let them have their feelings. This can be difficult, but it will be a great lesson for your teen as he matures. I know that you don't want your teen to wallow in negative emotions. But, when parents rush to neatly put away emotions, teens can see their feelings as abnormal—and they'll be less likely to share these feelings with their parents again. To quell the anxiety that may come up as you watch your teen struggle with the negative experience of feeling unpopular, give him space to have all the emotions either with you or alone (if he needs). Tell him that he can feel sad, disappointed, angry, or anything else, but you want him to know that he is not alone and he doesn't have to manage these feelings alone. Then, tell him where you'll be when he's ready to talk.

### 2. Support Their Identity Development

The second way to be supportive is to help your teen identify the person she wants to be. This includes keeping your ideas of popularity to yourself for

a while, and opening up a discussion of who your teen thinks is popular—and what she thinks it means to be a popular person. As she begins to share her ideas, listen and ask open-ended questions, such as “Can you tell me more about that idea?” or “What does that mean?” Even if you think you know the answers, getting your teen to express herself is a good way to learn exactly how she needs to be guided. Through this discussion you'll be able to learn whether your teen has a healthy self-image and self-esteem, what he thinks about his peers, and the social traits he desires. This information is invaluable as you help him manage his experience of feeling unpopular.

When you don't know who you are, it's easy to be lead astray. These two strategies encourage you to focus on how your teen feels about herself, instead of who you think she is (or should be). It also gives teens the foundation for finding internal strength regardless of who approves of them—a trait I am sure you want your teen to have as he gets older. And as you support him through this—instead of fix it for him—he begins to trust that he can rely on you to help him make decisions, rather than feeling like you'll make the decision for him.

*Mercedes Samudio, LCSW, is a parent coach based in Huntington Beach, CA. Learn more about Samudio at [TheParentingSkill.com](http://TheParentingSkill.com).*



# 12 Simple Ideas for a Healthier, Happier Teen

BY DIANA SIMEON

By now, you probably know how you should be eating, exercising, sleeping, and relaxing in order to maximize your physical and mental health, and that of your family. Yep, we're pretty sure you've heard—more than once—all the expert advice about eating a nutritious diet, working out, taking time to reduce stress, stepping away from screens, and, of course, getting enough shut-eye each night.

But who the heck can manage all that each and every day? Not most busy families.

So, as we contemplated writing about wellness for this issue of *Your Teen Magazine*, we decided to try something different. Sure, we'll give you the latest on what experts say we should be doing, but we're mostly going to focus on simple ideas that, with time, can make a big difference in your family's well-being. Here we go!





Ideas for healthier

# EATING

## What experts recommend:

A diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, legumes, lean meats, and good-for-you fats (think olive oil), with little to no processed food (as in those microwave dinners that are oh-so-easy.) We should also be sitting down to dinner as a family most nights.

Okay, okay. Back here on planet Earth, we know how tough it is for busy families to pull this off on a regular basis. Realistically, it requires planning—so you know what you’re cooking when you walk in the door from a long day at work—as well as buying mostly nutritious foods, so you and your teenagers won’t be tempted to eat too much processed food. “Because if it’s there, you are going to eat it,” says Dr. Adelle Cadieux, a psychologist with the Healthy Weight Center at Michigan’s Helen Devos Children’s Hospital.

But experts also stress that eating well does not have to happen overnight. In fact, even small changes can have a significant impact. “It’s just shifting your thinking a little bit,” recommends Dr. Jennifer Trachtenberg, a pediatrician and author of *The Smart Parent’s Guide to Getting Your Kids through Check Ups, Illnesses, and Accidents*. “You don’t have to become vegan or anything like that.” Here are some ideas to get you started.

## 1. ADD A FRUIT OR VEGETABLE TO EVERY MEAL.

“We don’t need to adopt a special diet,” says Cadieux. “It’s just choosing healthier foods.” So, here’s a simple idea. Try adding a fruit or vegetable to every meal. At breakfast, it could be berries or a banana on your cereal. An apple or pear with lunch. A salad with dinner. Hate chopping vegetables? Pick up pre-cut vegetables and fruit at your grocery store’s salad bar (or in the produce section). You can also buy frozen fruit and vegetables, which are often less expensive, but just as healthy because they’re frozen just hours after being picked.

## 2. CHANGE UP YOUR SNACKS.

Your teenager gets home from school—starving—and eats an entire bag of potato chips, ruining the dinner you’d planned in the process and not doing much for her own physical health. Sound familiar? Here’s an idea. Try slowly cutting back on the amount of chips, cookies, and other processed snack food you buy. “Just purchase those kinds of foods every once in a while,” advises Cadieux. “And instead make sure there are healthy snacks that your teenagers can just grab and go.” So this week, rather than potato chips, bring home some pita chips and a bag of popcorn. Try that for a couple of weeks, then ditch the Oreos in favor of granola bars or yogurt.

You can also start with just adding fruit or veggies to your teenager’s after-school snack. “If they’ve had some chips and they’re still hungry, then encourage

them to have an apple instead of more chips,” says Trachtenberg, who’s also a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. “It’s just small habit changes one at a time.” (Another excellent habit to encourage, says Cadieux: Make sure your teenager eats breakfast.)

## 3. USE SMALLER PLATES.

Bet you didn’t expect this idea, but the bigger your plate, the more food you are likely to eat—and Americans in general eat too much food, even healthy food. “One of the things we Americans seem to really struggle with is eating appropriate portion sizes,” says Cadieux. “There is a lot of research to show if you have a bigger plate, you are more likely to fill it up.” So, consider ditching your dinner plates and instead buying some smaller ones, like salad plates—which, if you think about it, are about the size of the dinner plates we grew up with.

And how about sitting down for family dinner every night? That’s a difficult one, especially in families where teenagers are playing sports. The research does indicate that meal-time togetherness has some important benefits for teenagers, including better grades, lower risk of substance use, and lower rates of obesity. But here’s the good news: it doesn’t have to be dinner. Or even every day. A good goal, according to research by The Family Dinner Project, is for teenagers to eat a meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner—with at least one parent five times a week.

Ideas for encouraging

# EXERCISING



Photo: Beth Segal / Location: Aspire Fitness

**What experts recommend:**

At least 30, but ideally 60, minutes of physical exercise every day.

Many of us find it tough to fit exercise into our day. For teenagers in particular, it's a mixed bag. Teenagers participating in a sport are getting plenty of exercise, at least during the season. But teenagers not engaged in athletics are frequently not getting anywhere near the amount of exercise they need. Here are some ideas:

**1. THERE'S NO RIGHT EXERCISE.**

If your teenager doesn't like organized sports, don't sweat it. "You just don't want them sedentary," explains Trachtenberg. "It can be walking the dog or riding a bike. Even playing

those active video games is better than just sitting there." It also doesn't have to be a single activity. If walking the dog, then playing an active video game adds up to 30 or so minutes, mission accomplished.

**2. MAKE IT A FAMILY (OR FRIENDS) AFFAIR.**

You may already be anticipating the eye rolls, but it is possible to exercise as a family. And as in all things wellness, parents should be modeling the behavior they want their teenagers to adopt. The key, however, is to find activities your teenager actually wants to do. "My own daughter is not super athletic," notes Trachtenberg. "So we started skiing and we love it." Trachtenberg also takes her daughter to yoga and sometimes, it's just saying some-

thing like, "We're all going for a walk," Trachtenberg says. "There's always the, 'I don't want to go!,' but five seconds into it, everyone's happy." Friends can also be helpful. Maybe your sedentary teenager would be willing to sign up for a yoga class with a friend, for example.

**3. WORK UP TO IT.**

"If your teenager has not been physically active, they will need to work up to it," says Cadieux. "If you try to do 60 minutes right away you are more likely to give up." Start with a couple times a week, then over time add another. "Or just add a few more minutes," Cadieux suggests. "So you are not making a significant change all at once; you are adding a small step at a time."





Ideas for better

# SLEEPING

## What experts recommend:

Teenagers require 8 ½-to-9 ½ hours of sleep per night (adults need 7-to-8 hours) and should be going to bed and getting up at about the same time during the week as they do on weekends (though an hour or so later on each end is okay).

Does anyone get enough sleep? Certainly our teenagers don't. More than one study has found that the majority of teenagers are not getting anywhere near the recommended amount, thanks to a variety of factors, including school start times before 8:00 a.m. Teenagers not only need more sleep than adults, but they also have a different sleep cycle. In general, they get sleepier later at night and are not ready to wake up until later in the morning. You can lament it as much as you want, but by high school your teenager will be going to bed after you do.

Sleep is a cornerstone of wellness for all of us, but especially for teenagers. "Getting by with six or seven hours is

fraught with peril," says Dr. John Schuen, a pulmonologist with Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who's worked on pediatric sleep issues for more than two decades. Indeed, the list of risks for sleep-deprived teens is long—and ugly. Not only does it impact academic success, but it can also lead to higher rates of obesity, mental health issues, and substance abuse issues. Here are three ideas to help your teenager get more sleep.

### 1. NO SCREENS AT BEDTIME.

Period. The bottom line: screens and sleep do not mix, and there's mounting evidence that screens cut into your sleep by as much as an hour per night. The truth is that for many teenagers it can be tempting to be on their devices late into the night. What's more, the light emitted by a screen is like a wake-up call for our brains. "It stimulates the centers in our brain that help us stay alert during the day," explains Schuen. Some teenagers can turn off their devices on their own. "Others may need a parent to step in," he says, adding that, in general, parents should talk fre-

quently with teenagers about the importance of sleep.

### 2. LIMIT SLEEPOVERS TO FRIDAY NIGHTS.

Think of staying up late at a sleepover like flying coast to coast. Your teenager will be jet-lagged. "Even though you can physically move your sleep clock by staying up later, your natural sleep clock can only move about an hour a night," explains Schuen. "That's why we get jet lag." So by sticking with Friday nights for sleepovers, your teen has Saturday and Sunday night to recover before having to get up for school on Monday.

### 3. NO CAFFEINE.

Teenagers are much more sensitive to caffeine than adults or even twenty-somethings. "Caffeine will last in a teenager's system for hours longer," explains Schuen. So talk to your teenager about the ramifications of drinking caffeinated beverages, like coffee, soda, and especially so-called "energy" drinks—Monster, Red Bull, Rockstar—which can contain high, sometimes dangerous, levels of caffeine.

Ideas for

# REDUCING STRESS

## What we should be doing:

Helping our teenagers find a balance in which they're challenged but not overwhelmed at school, enjoying meaningful activities, spending time with friends and family, and sometimes doing nothing at all.

If your teenager's life seems more stressful than yours was when you were a teen, it probably is. A 2014 study by the American Psychological Association found that teen stress levels now exceed those of adults. You don't have to dig too deep to see why. School is more stressful, thanks to the increased emphasis on college admissions—today's students start worrying about college on day one of high school—not to mention the always-on nature of our current culture, which includes 24/7 access to technology. Here are some ideas for bringing down stress levels in your home.

### 1. CHECK YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

This tip might be an exception to our promise to focus on simple ideas. But if you can pull it off, you'll be doing a lot for your teenager's well-being. The bottom line: High expectations are one thing, but expecting that your teenager will

go to an Ivy League or some other elite college may cause more stress than your teenager can reasonably handle. For starters, teenagers worry deeply about disappointing their parents. And, moreover, for the vast majority of our teenagers, gaining admission to these colleges is not realistic—less than one percent of all students go to these schools. The fact is that even if your teenager can pull off top grades, top scores, top everything, there's an excellent chance he won't get in. (Yes, it's that hard).

"The kids who come from families where performance is valued highly, they are maxed out. They are going to bed at 11:00 at night and getting up at 4:00 in the morning," explains Sara Linberg, a middle- and high-school counselor at the top-ranked Central Kitsap School District in Washington. "I have been doing this for 17 years, and once in a while I run into a kid who loves it, but for the most part, they don't." Linberg instead encourages parents to think less about college and more about helping their teenagers discover who they are. What does your teenager enjoy doing outside of school? What classes does your teenager really want to take, regardless of whether they're AP or not. As it hap-

pens, this is also what most colleges say they're seeking: authentic students, who pursue their own interests, not someone else's. "High school should not be about checking off a list for college. There really is a college for everyone," Linberg says. If you're a parent who struggles in this department, we recommend Frank Bruni's wonderful book, *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*.

### 2. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS.

It may sound New Age-y, but there's scientific evidence that taking some time each day to practice mindfulness brings down stress levels—and, in turn, makes it easier to handle stress. "There is a lot of evidence-based research that shows the brain's anatomy changes in profound and impactful ways when we practice mindfulness," explains Dr. Francoise Adan, a psychiatrist and medical director of University Hospitals Connor Integrative Health Network. Mindfulness is basically about being in the moment. That helps reduce stress because so much of what we stress about has to do with what has happened—"I failed the test"—or what we think may happen—"I am going to fail the test."



Photo: Beth Segal



## Ideas to Get More Mindful...

And oftentimes, these worries have no basis in reality, adds Adan. “So learning to be present can be very helpful.” (See our sidebar, “Ideas to Get More Mindful,” for specific techniques.)

### 3. FIND SOME DOWNTIME EVERY DAY.

We all need time to relax in our day, and that includes our teenagers. If your teenager is so scheduled that she can't regularly spend 30 minutes to an hour just “chilling,” then it may be time to make some changes. “The business of our lives is really taking the fun out of it,” says Adan. “Parents, teenagers, even younger kids, have a long to-do list, and we tend to add and add to it and forget how to just be.” Also important is downtime from technology, and in particular, social media. “Their lives are so wrapped up in Twitter, Snapchat, all these apps,” explains school-counselor Linberg. “And there's all this self-imposed pressure.” Consider setting guidelines for the whole family: no technology at the dinner table, for example.

Research shows that people who practice mindfulness—focusing on the present moment—enjoy many benefits, including lower levels of stress. That's because mindfulness helps us feel less caught up in our worries and more fully engaged with (and appreciative of) the lives we're living. Here are some ideas to become more mindful.

### 1. BE PRESENT.

“Mindfulness is about paying attention to what we're doing,” notes Dr. Francoise Adan, a psychiatrist and medical director of University Hospitals Connor Integrative Health Network in Cleveland, Ohio. “If we are having dinner with each other, it's setting aside our phones. If we are driving, we can be mindful of driving. This does not take extra time.”

### 2. SCAN YOUR SENSES.

The next time you're feeling overwhelmed—and worrying too much about what's happened or what needs to happen—Adan suggests using your senses to pull you back to the present. Simply take a few minutes to take stock of the “right now” using your senses. What are you hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and seeing?

### 3. USE A BREATHING EXERCISE.

Another way to practice mindfulness is to use simple breathing exercises. Here's one of Adan's favorites: breathe in to the count of four, hold your breath for the count of three, then exhale to the count of seven. Repeat. “This is just one way to center ourselves and relax,” notes Adan. “It stops the crazy thoughts you have in your head be-

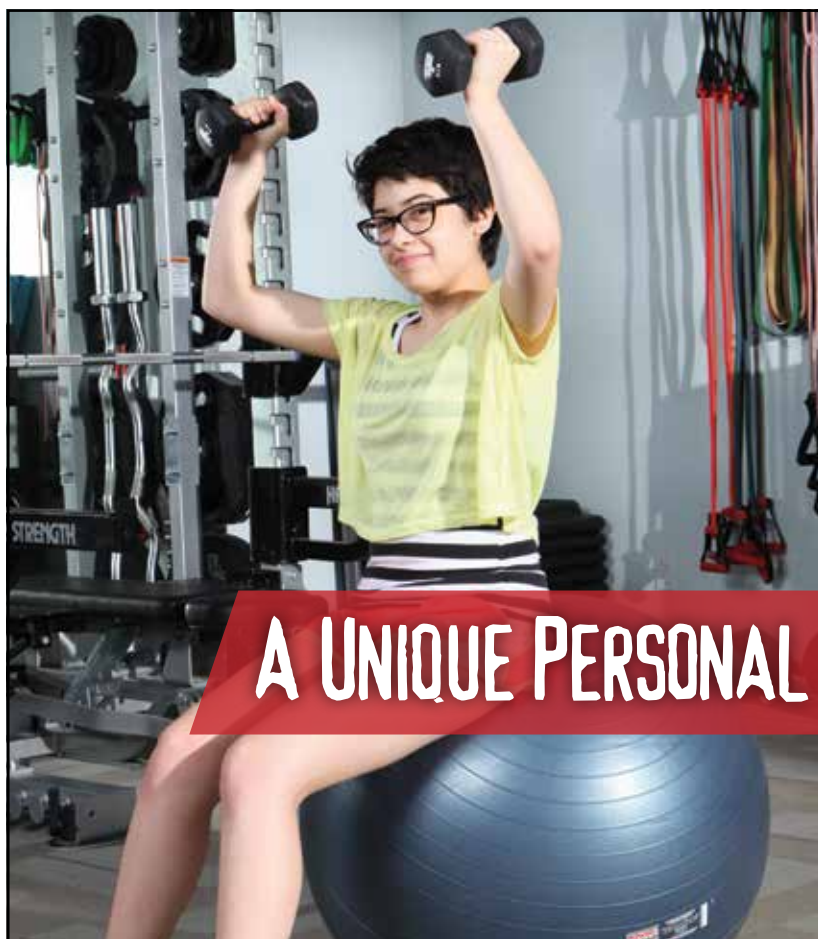
cause you have to focus on your breath.”

### 4. PRACTICE GRATITUDE.

By now, you've probably heard about the benefits of practicing gratitude, which include a more positive outlook. Gratitude is also a form of mindfulness because, like other mindfulness techniques, it helps you focus on the present. “It's taking a moment to be thankful for what we already have,” explains Adan.

### 5. USE AN APP.

Another simple way to start practicing mindfulness is to download one of the many mindfulness apps available for your smartphone. Most offer daily guided meditations that take just a few minutes. Popular apps include Headspace, Omvana, and Bhuddify.



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YES!

# I Finally Lost the Weight

By Tali Laserson

I walked through the front door, backpack over my shoulders and smile on my face. It was a calm spring evening in 2009, and I had just returned from another day of seventh grade. My mom was sitting at the kitchen table in silence. “Tal, come sit down with me for a minute,” she said. I sat down by her, and she began to explain, “I hope you’re not angry sweetie... but I wanted to tell you that I signed you up for a program this summer. It’s a weight-loss program.” I was shocked and insulted, and my emotions overtook me. “You always look beautiful, honey, but I just want you to be healthy, too,” she tried to explain, but I was not open to her reasoning.

That summer after seventh grade, I begrudgingly participated in the weight loss program and lost 13 pounds. While we were both happy with the results, I think my mom and I knew in the back of our minds that the fight was not over. With weight loss, going through the motions “because my mom told me to” was not going to yield lasting results.

I entered eighth grade only slightly overweight, but by 10th grade my weight had climbed back up. I still had friends, a great boyfriend, and a lot of confidence. Despite my doctor’s warnings about my weight creeping into the “obesity” category, my dad’s polite suggestions that I “just try going to a personal trainer one time,” and my mom’s subtle looks of wor-

ry as she watched her daughter ignore her health, I wasn’t concerned.

For the remainder of high school, my weight fluctuated, and so did my relationship with my parents. Being told to exercise more only made me want to get away with exercising less, and being told to eat less only made me want to hide alone and eat more. The more I thought about my weight, the more I resented my own parents.

After high school, I spent a gap year in Israel. Being abroad was a wonderful experience, but it also presented new obstacles that exacerbated my weight problem. With little time for exercise and new food options, I ignored my weight problem for yet another year—gaining another 25 pounds.

Once I returned to the States, I knew that my mom still was hoping for me to lose weight, but I didn’t have the time or desire to worry about it, and I didn’t allow her the time to catch me for a conversation about it. I was avoiding the problem, recklessly hoping it would go away. Not only was I running from my mom, I was running from my own reality. By then, I think my mom was just hoping and praying that I would grow up enough to face my reality before I suffered any serious medical consequences.

In September 2015, I finally accepted my situation—on my own terms.

In my first week of college, my boyfriend of 2 ½ years dumped me. After I drowned in my tears for a couple of weeks, a profound realization suddenly hit me: the only way to solve my heartbreak was time. But my weight, on the other hand, was in my power to fix.

I finally decided to start my weight loss journey—going to the gym almost daily, weighing myself weekly, and making healthy and realistic modifications to my eating habits.

I don’t have an easy fix to share with you. I didn’t do an expensive program that you’ve never heard of or discover a new drastic diet. All I did was discover that I care. This time, I wasn’t doing it “because my mom told me to.” I was doing it because I wanted to. The support from my friends and family as well as the realization that I had the power to create my own happiness kept me working toward my goal.

I walked through the front door, suitcase in my hand and smile on my face. It was a calm winter night and I had just returned home from my first semester of college, 45 pounds lighter than when I left in August. I looked up to see my mom sitting at the kitchen table. “Thank you for taking care of my precious daughter,” she said, her eyes welling with tears. ■

*Tali Laserson is a sophomore in college.*





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\* From *The Wholehearted Parenting Manifesto* by Dr. Brené Brown. To read the whole manifesto, visit: <http://www.bellefairejcb.org/say/say-social-advocates-for-youth>.

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# A Realistic Approach to ALCOHOL

By Cathie Ericson


"Little kids, little problems. Big kids, big problems." There are few areas where that adage rings truer than with teens and drinking. Here are the facts: It's illegal.

Most parents don't condone it. It's unhealthy. The best tactic is to delay it as long as you can.

In fact, there's a lot of evidence that parents should strive to keep their younger teenagers away from alcohol because it damages the developing teenage brain.

But here's another fact: Many teens are drinking. According to a Call to Action on Underage Drinking from the U.S. Surgeon General, by age 18, more than 70 percent of teens have had at least one drink. And they typically don't stop at one. The report also found that teens are more likely to binge drink than adults: On average, teens have about five drinks on a single occasion.





That's why we thought it was time to offer some realistic advice on teens and alcohol. There's no doubt that this conversation will look different in every family and will depend on the age of your teen and your own individual values. But if your goal is safety, it's imperative to know what to do when you suspect that your teen may be exposed to situations where drinking is occurring. Here are some steps you can take to help.

### 1. Have the conversation early and often.

You must open the lines of communication, and keep them open. "You might even say, 'It's illegal, and it's unhealthy, but if you do drink, you have to be safe,'" says Dr. Marjorie Rosenblatt, a physician in Rye Brook, New York. She stresses that zero tolerance does not help teens because they will be less likely to call for help when they are in trouble if all alcohol is taboo.

And it's not a one-and-done conversation, adds Dr. Tori Cordiano, a clinical psychologist in Beachwood, Ohio, who suggests seizing on any openings where you can share your views. "They know a lecture when they hear one, so make sure it's multiple, short conversations," she says.

An important part of the conversation should be helping teens think through other options. Cordiano suggests casually saying, "Hey, I know parties with this group can get rowdy. What's your plan if it gets out of control or the person you're riding with ends up drinking?"

You also might want to give your teens tips on how to look like they're drinking, if that makes them feel more comfortable, says Rosenblatt. "Drinking is so glorified and glamorized that there is immense social pressure, and kids want to fit in." They can nurse one beer all night; they can have seltzer with lime; they can drink anything out of a red Solo cup.

You can also help them think through what to say if kids are pressuring them, such as, "My mom

would kill me, and I can't risk missing out on the next party." Or, "The coach will bench me if I'm caught."

### 2. Lay down a few inflexible rules.

Even if you know drinking is going on, there are some situations that can't be tolerated. Here are three to give your teen:

- **Don't drink and drive.** Offer them alternatives, from a no-questions-asked policy to an Uber app on their phone, says Dr. Marsha Rosenbaum, author of the Drug Policy Alliance's booklet, *Safety 1st: A Reality Based Approach to Teens and Drugs and Alcohol*.

- **Binge drinking is dangerous.** Talk to them about moderation.

- **You have to help a friend if they are in trouble.** Rosenbaum shares the following clear directives for your child: Never let a friend pass out while lying face up because she could choke. Reposition the friend so she's lying on her side, and don't leave her alone. When in doubt, call 9-1-1. In 33 states and the District of Columbia, your teen won't get in trouble for underage drinking by calling 9-1-1 for a peer in a medical emergency, thanks to what are known as "Good Samaritan" or "medical amnesty" laws. Many colleges also have such policies.

### 3. Let them know they should always call you.

Situations can get out of control very quickly, and teens need to know that if something is going badly, it is always in their best interest to call a parent for help, says Cordiano. You may have a conversation later (much later) about the poor judgment, but impress upon them that they shouldn't hesitate to call for a ride or any other help.

### 4. Don't be the parent who hosts the party.

There is a common attitude among party-holding parents that it's fine

if they take the keys so no one will drink and drive. The theory is that they want teens to be safe and experiment at home.

However, says Cordiano, "it's not a safe experimentation, and it's breaking the law." She believes that it encourages teens to drink to excess, and that the parents are then giving teens their stamp of approval. "It never turns out to be as controlled as parents expect," she cautions.

That's not to say that you can't demystify alcohol by letting them have a glass of wine at home, where it's a safe environment and you're trying to model moderation, says Rosenblatt. Everyone knows the kid who went to college, discovered alcohol for the first time, and went amok. However, Rosenbaum stresses that this should only be if a child has shown curiosity. "There's never a reason to introduce alcohol."

### 5. Know when there's a problem.

Consider moderation and context, says Rosenbaum. "If your kid is otherwise doing well in life—for example, their grades are good, they are participating in sports or clubs, and they have a social life—don't panic because they are occasionally using alcohol." However, she says, if it's being used on a daily basis or in the wrong situations, like before school or when alone, that can indicate an abusive pattern where you should seek help.

The bottom line, says Rosenbaum, is that even though we all want our kids to be abstinent, in the end you can't always have that. "So what is your Plan B? What is your fall back? Personally I've always felt that the health and safety of my kids was the No. 1 priority." ■



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# Birth Control: Beyond the Pill

Talking with your teen about birth control probably isn't your favorite conversation, but it's important. What should you and your teen know about birth control? *Your Teen* asked Dr. Anne Burke, OB/GYN and director of the Family Planning Division at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, for advice.

## **Having your teen daughter ask for birth control can be a very difficult thing for parents to hear. How should parents respond?**

It can be overwhelming to hear about, or even think about, your teen being sexually active. Any conversation between a girl and her provider is, of course, confidential, but it is great when parents are involved in this discussion. If your daughter asks for birth control and is through puberty, then I would say it is better to act sooner rather than later. If parents are resisting because they aren't comfortable with a sexually active teen, I can absolutely sympathize. It's best when there is a good relationship as a base where these things are okay to talk about between parents and teens. It's also perfectly reasonable to encourage your daughter to wait before she becomes sexually active. Each family should decide on the best approach to this conversation, but we encourage safe sex. If your daughter is sexually active, she should be using birth control.

## **What methods of birth control do you recommend for teens?**

There are lots of good options. The method I would recommend depends on the individual's wants and expectations. The baseline for reference is probably the birth control pill. Statistics tell us that at least half of sexually active teens have used the pill, so we often start the conversa-

tion by discussing the pill because it is familiar to most people. We will also encourage teens to consider other very effective means of birth control such as the IUD and implants, which are longer-lasting and twenty times more effective than the pill.

## **What are the pros and cons of the pill?**

The pluses are several: familiarity, ease of use, lighter periods with less cramping, predictability, and fewer symptoms of PMS. Clearing up acne can also be a positive side effect. The pill can help reduce stress, hassle, and inconvenience, especially if a teen is missing a lot of school or sports because of debilitating periods. The minuses are mainly that you have to take it every day, which is a commitment, and teens can forget. The pill doesn't work if you don't take it!

## **What options do you recommend for a girl who doesn't want to take something every day?**

More providers are recommending IUDs and implants for long-term reversible birth control. This is appropriate for a young woman in college, who can have an IUD put in place and then just forget about it. The IUD of decades ago had a really bad rap, but today's IUDs — hormonal and copper — can be safely used by most women, even adolescents. We also discuss the contraceptive implant (Nexplanon), which





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is a flexible rod the size of a matchstick inserted under the skin of the arm, which lasts up to three years. The American Academy of Pediatrics has actually designated the IUD and the contraceptive implant as appropriate first line methods of birth control for teens. There are also shots like Depo-Provera, which you get every three months, or the NuvaRing, which a young woman inserts into her vagina and has all the hormonal effects of the birth control pills. If she doesn't feel comfortable using a tampon, however, then the Ring might not appeal to her. It all depends on the young woman, and it should be her decision, not the provider's or her mother's. She needs to feel comfortable, safe, and confident with the method that she chooses.

### **Birth control won't prevent STDs. What should girls know about preventing infection?**

Teens still need to be protected against pelvic infection and sexually transmitted infections. Untreated pelvic infection is a significant risk factor for later infertility. Condoms should also be a part of the conversation. The pill will protect you against pregnancy better than a condom, but the pill will not protect you against infection, so a condom is better at that. These are two different methods, but they each have a separate function.

### **Can birth control be used to eliminate periods altogether?**

Yes, in certain situations we can use birth control to

eliminate menstruation entirely. The clinical evidence suggests that it is very, very safe to do this. If you are not on any prescribed hormones or medicine and you are not having a period, then that is a cause for concern. But if you are on birth control, there is no physiological reason to have a period, unless you simply prefer the reliability. If you think about the way birth control works, it is preventing the uterine lining from forming, or keeping that lining very thin, so really there is nothing building up inside the uterus. Continuous, extended dosing is something that we can do for those patients who want to eliminate monthly bleeding entirely. It's a good thing to talk about with your health-care provider, and there are pill packs specifically made to be taken this way.

### **What should boys know about birth control?**

This topic tends by default to be something that we — as OB/GYNs — only discuss with girls, but we should talk to boys about this as well because it affects them too. Boys need to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and to be aware of the risk of pregnancy, so we should be sharing knowledge with them as well, emphasizing that the responsibility is on both members of the couple. Boys should understand the proper role and use of condoms so they protect themselves, first and foremost. ■

*Interview by Jane Parent*



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# 5 Steps to Getting a College Scholarship

By Joanna Nesbit

**W**hen it comes to paying for college, there are two types of financial aid. The first is need-based aid, which is awarded based on a family's income (the lower your income, the more you'll get and vice-versa). The second type is non-need-based aid, which is also called merit or scholarship aid. This is not based on a family's income.

Many middle- and upper-income families will not qualify for much—if any—need-based aid (though middle-income families may qualify for need aid at private colleges), so merit aid is about the only way to help lower the amount they'll pay. Because let's face it, paying full price for a college education is cost prohibitive for even upper-income families.

Here are five ideas to help get your student merit aid.

## Who Gets Merit Aid?

"Merit aid is money that colleges use to attract students who meet the institution's profile goals," explains Cecilia Castellano, vice president of Student Strategic Planning at Bowling Green State University. Typically, these will be students whose grades and SAT/ACT scores fall at the higher range of a col-

lege's accepted applicants. But merit aid also is awarded for less obvious attributes, such as leadership, community service, music, geographic diversity, and sports, Castellano says. At the end of the day, colleges want to improve their reputation and national ranking. One way to accomplish that goal is to use scholarships to attract exceptional students.

**1** It helps to be a top scholar with an AP course load, standout SAT/ACT scores, and extracurricular activities. However, top students shouldn't make the mistake of thinking they'll get merit aid wherever they apply. Highly selective colleges don't offer merit aid because accepted students are all standouts, and these colleges can charge for their brand name. They offer need-based awards only. Generally, students looking for merit money will do better applying to lesser-known



Photo: Beth Segal

colleges with higher acceptance rates.

B students can also qualify for merit aid at the right colleges, especially if they stand out in other ways. “B students will want to look for colleges where the average GPA is lower,” advises Paula Bishop, a private college financial aid advisor in Bellevue, Washington. Look for colleges where the student’s grades and test scores fall in the top third or quarter. Higher acceptance rates don’t mean lower-quality students; they simply lessen the pressure to be an academic superstar.

**2** To find colleges where your student will stand out, Bishop advises families to do their research, specifically using what’s called the Common Data Set. This is an annual survey in which colleges report all kinds of statistics, including enrollment, class size, and how much—and the types of—finan-

cial aid they award. Search for “[college name] + common data set” to find the information.

**3** Another option: check out the website *DIYCollegeRankings.com*, which will show you how to use common data sets combined with data published annually by the National Center for Education Statistics to search for colleges offering merit aid. Don’t automatically nix a college for its sticker price. A lesser-known private college might offer a robust merit award. Generally, public schools don’t offer much merit aid, but that varies by state.

**4** Bishop recommends also searching merit scholarships on college websites themselves. Some list scholarships clearly. Boise State University, for example, offers automatic scholarships to resident and non-resident students who

meet specific criteria. Other schools are less transparent and trickier to predict, but you can use a college’s net price calculator (search the name of the college and net price calculator to find it) to input a variety of test scores and grades to see what pops up for merit aid. If a school’s calculator doesn’t ask for grades and scores, it likely doesn’t award merit aid. Before getting excited about a particular college’s merit opportunities, do consider whether the college is realistic for your student’s grades/scores.

**5** And, finally, talk to your friends with older kids. Find out where they applied and whether they received merit aid. Word of mouth is valuable and can help uncover colleges you’ve never heard of. ■



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# Where Teens Hide Online

By June Scharf

When a sexting scandal hit a Colorado high school late last year, many parents were shocked to learn about the "ghost apps" that the teenagers involved used to evade detection.

Ghost apps will appear to be one thing—like a calculator—but hide a secret functionality. Take, for example, "Audio Manager/Hide It Pro." This app looks like it controls a phone's audio settings, but once you enter a password, it actually provides access to a stash of hidden files. Similarly, Calculator% (not a typo) looks like a calculator, but lets users

hide photos and videos from prying (read: parental) eyes.

Other ghost apps elude oversight using what appears to be run-of-the-mill phone technology: GPS. These apps falsify a person's location when posting to social media and mess with the phone's own tracking devices. And then, of course, there are more well-known apps, like Snapchat and Wickr, in which photos and videos automatically disappear within minutes of being received. Unless you are peering over your teenager's shoulder at the exact moment they receive these messages, there is no way for you to see them.

So what's a parent to do? For starters, it's important to understand that it's normal for teenagers to hide some stuff from their parents. And parents should be willing to give their teenagers some amount of privacy, even online. Just because your teenager is using Snapchat does not mean she's engaged in reckless behavior. In fact, most teenagers using Snapchat are not trying to hide their activity; they just use it to socialize with their friends.

But if you've found a ghost app on your teenager's device, or you're simply a concerned parent of a tween or teen, here are some ideas.

**1 Monitor, especially tweens and younger teens.** Think of the early stages of your adolescent's smartphone use as a training period during which your adolescent knows you're watching to make sure he's not only safe, but using his device responsibly. Periodically check for new apps on your adolescent's device. If you find something unfamiliar, Google those apps to find out what they do, recommends Sedgrid Lewis, an on-line safety expert.

There is no one-size-fits-all way to monitor, and if you're a parent who prefers to control what your adolescent can access and get

*If you know your adolescent is on Instagram, check it out yourself. Same with SnapChat, Twitter, or anything else your tween enjoys using on his device.*

reports on your adolescent's activities, there are plenty of options. Lewis recommends mSpy, which offers full access to images passed through apps like Snapchat, Whatsapp, Instagram, and so on. In general, however, you want to let your adolescent know that you're monitoring. Not being above-board will only breed resentment and distrust, say experts.

**2 Educate yourself.** It's also important for parents to take some time to understand how teenagers are using their devices. "We have to participate," stresses social media expert Jennifer Lehner. "We have to understand it and not just from a

policing standpoint." If you know your adolescent is on Instagram, check it out yourself. Same with SnapChat, Twitter, or anything else your tween enjoys using on his device.

**3 Talk expectations.** Parents should make sure adolescents understand expectations for online behavior, just as they do offline behavior. "Those are taught in the home by the parents," stresses Lewis, adding that a phone contract that lays out your family's rules, with consequences for violations, can be helpful. "Probably the most important parental control is to talk with your kids," says Stephen Balkam, chief executive officer of New York City's Family Online Safety Institute.

cer of New York City's Family Online Safety Institute.

**4 If you find something, stay calm.** Say you find a disturbing message, video, or photo, or even a ghost app, on your teenager's phone. What now? Well, above all, remain calm, stresses Balkam. "If you lose it, they won't forget it," he notes. "You must steel yourself to stay calm when things come up, as they will." What to do next is up to you, but above all, treat it as a teachable moment. "When my daughter was young, we found her texting at two in the morning," recalls Balkam. "24 hours without her cell phone really got her attention." ■



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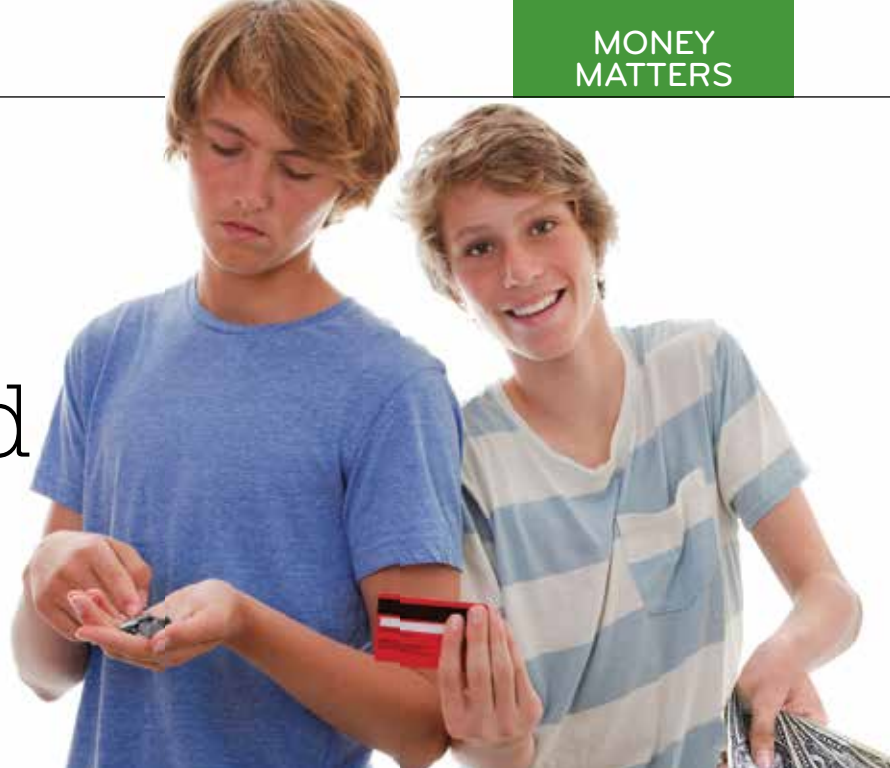
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# When a Friend Has More (or Less) Money

By Mary Helen Berg



**M**y older daughter's classmate invited friends to fly on a private jet to see Mick Jagger perform at the Super Bowl. My younger daughter's classmate declined a movie outing because her mom didn't get paid until the following week. These examples of financial differences may occupy different ends of the economic spectrum, but both scenarios raised complicated feelings and questions for my teens.

While your teen may be able to tell you which friend lives in the fanciest house or totes the most expensive bag, they may not understand how money—or lack of it—can complicate relationships. Teens confronting friendship economics for the first time may not have a clue how to handle them, says Dr. Mary Gresham, a financial psychologist based in Atlanta.

"They get embarrassed in both directions," Gresham says. "The highly affluent teens with more money than their peer group, the less affluent teens who have less money than their peer group—they're all embarrassed and ashamed of what they do and don't have."

These simple strategies will help your teen navigate money matters among friends and feel more comfortable with their own financial situation.

## TEACH DOLLARS AND SENSE

Instill your values and attitudes about money in your teens "so they don't equate self worth with net worth,"

advises Neale Godfrey, chair of the Children's Financial Network.

When teens desperately want to blend in, remind them that each family's economic situation is distinct, adds author Beth Kobliner, a member of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans.

"You can explain, 'That's not how our family chooses to spend our money,' and then talk about what your family does value, even if it's not material—like spending time together watching movies over the weekend," Kobliner says.

## GIVE THEM WORDS

Provide your teen with vocabulary to gracefully decline an event that might break the bank. "I'd rather do something else," or "That's not how I want to spend my allowance," are both acceptable and truthful ways to avoid overly expensive outings, suggests Gresham.

If money talk becomes too awkward, your teen can say, "I don't feel comfortable discussing this," advises Variny Yim, regional director for Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. "It's teaching your kids that they have a choice in the matter."

## OFFER ALTERNATIVES

Fun doesn't need to cost a fortune. When friends propose another expensive night at the movies, your teen can suggest a Netflix marathon complete with homemade popcorn. Restaurant lunches too pricey? Try a picnic in the park.

On the flipside, affluent parents whose teens take costly outings for granted should coach their kids to be sensitive and flexible, Kobliner says.

"You need to have discussions with your kids about respecting what their friends can afford and opting for less-expensive activities if need be," she says.

## BE THOUGHTFUL

If your teen generously wants to foot the bill for a less fortunate friend, acknowledge her kindness but offer to help negotiate what may be a sticky situation, suggests Kobliner.

"If it is an activity that is expensive and you, as parents, want to help out your child's friend, make sure to do so in a low-key way that gets the friend's parents' sign-off," she says. "Otherwise your kind gesture might be misinterpreted as being pushy—or worse, insulting."

## ROLE PLAY

Practice "courage-building exercises" with your teens to help prepare them for uncomfortable money moments.

"This is a skill they have to learn; this is a muscle they must work," Yim says. "Awkward money situations are going to arise. The goal is to simply give your kids the courage, the words, and the ability to not beat themselves up for something they have no control over. That's the bigger life lesson." ■



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# Sibling Love:

## When the Feeling Isn't Mutual

By Michelle Icard

**I**s it normal for one sibling to adore the other in a way that is completely unreciprocated?

Based on the number of times I've been asked this recently, the answer is a resounding yes. Parents often come to me in crisis over one child who repeatedly rebukes the other's attempts at affection and connection. This must be a normal part of growing up—and it is painful for all involved, especially the parents who feel helpless watching one child be hurt by the other.

This begs the question: Can you make a child like a sibling? It's hard to imagine that scenario being successful. Forcing someone to feel affection goes against the natural order, and if you're attempting to force a tween or teen, several things are working against you: the desire to assert an independent

identity (Hey, I'm nothing like my sister!), impulsive instincts (I tend to react emotionally without thinking rationally first), and testing of boundaries (I can't mouth off at school but my brother is a good place to practice).

This kind of sibling torment may be normal, and it may be hard to force genuine kindness, but that doesn't mean you're at a total loss.

Here are some tactics that can make a big difference in fostering a happier home for siblings and parents:

### SHOW EMPATHY.

It can be hard when one sibling wants more than the other can give. Some kids are less affectionate than others. Some like more time alone. Realize that every child has different preferences and that's okay. Show your children that you respect their choices by empathizing with their positions. Ask questions without judgment to gauge why your child dislikes showing affection to a sibling.

### COMMUNICATE TO YOUR KIDS SEPARATELY.

Don't sit your kids down together to demand changes. No matter what you say, one or both of them will feel like you're taking sides. Once they perceive that you're emotionally involved, you become a pawn in any manipulation games they want to play on each other.

### TALK TO THE OFFENDER WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL.

If you wait until the next big incident, you'll be talking over your kid's anger and resentment, both of which are great distractions from actually hearing what you have to say. Instead, pick a time when you've had a nice evening. Then, pulling one child aside, you might say something like, "I noticed the other day your sister looked hurt when you yelled at her. It looked to me like she was trying to show you her artwork and you snapped at her. This seems to be becoming a habit. I can't allow people in our family to treat each other so disrespectfully, so if I see that again, there will be a consequence."

*P.S.:* Make sure you speak respectfully to both kids so you can honestly stand by your line about how you communicate respectfully within your family.

### FIGURE OUT AND COMMUNICATE AHEAD OF TIME WHAT THE CONSEQUENCE WILL BE.

You might ignore little things like heavy sighs or eye rolls, but not mean comments or physical taunts. Let your kid know that anti-social behavior toward a sibling will result in whatever punishment you think as appropriate. I like giving extra chores. Taking things away (time with friends, electronics, etc.) doesn't help me in any way or teach my child new skills. You might say, "When you are mean to your sister, it hurts the family. The consequence is that you need to give back to the family. You can do this by doing a list of extra yard work, kitchen chores, etc. that I will provide."

Remember that you can't force kids to like each other or want to spend time together, but you can enforce basic levels of respect and thoughtful communication. ■

*Michelle Icard is the author of Middle School Makeover: Improving the Way You and Your Child Experience the Middle School Years. Learn more about her work with middle schoolers and their parents at [MichelleintheMiddle.com](http://MichelleintheMiddle.com)*



Photo: Beth Segal

# Meet Cullen Douglas

When actor/writer Cullen Douglas isn't in front of a camera or on a stage, he and his wife Rachel are raising —and homeschooling —two teenage boys, 19-year-old Gabriel and 14-year-old Cameron. Gabriel was born with Down syndrome and recently beat a cancer diagnosis. We sat down with Douglas—recognizable from recurring roles on *Agents of SHIELD* and *Scandal*—to talk about what it's like raising a son with a disability alongside a son without a disability.



## What has it been like parenting a son with Down syndrome and cancer?

Gabe has never been defined by Down syndrome. It's just a part of who he is. My wife and I quickly learned to get out of our own way and let him teach us how to be the kind of parents he needed. We also learned to go with the flow, which actually became our motto during his battle with Leukemia.

## How were you able to manage that with your work as an actor and writer?

My agents were incredibly supportive of me during that time. I had to make some tough choices. I couldn't imagine getting on a plane to fly overseas for a job knowing that I would just be waiting for that text, call, or email from home saying "Gabe's gone back into the hospital." I wouldn't be serving the job very well, and I'd feel completely helpless on the other side of the world. So, that was a challenge, but the most important thing was getting the family through the cancer journey: getting Gabe healthy again,

and making sure Cameron felt loved and supported and that his needs were being met.

## Has it been difficult for Cameron with all of the attention on his brother?

Cameron has had an amazing journey of his own. Being the younger brother of an individual with a disability has never been a huge issue, but then suddenly cancer became a part of the scenario. Rachel and I tried to make sure that there were opportunities for Cameron along the way, that he felt just as loved and just as special and didn't feel like, "Gosh, I should have gotten cancer, too, so I could get this kind of attention."

## How did you and your wife stay strong through it all?

We were honest with each other and said, "This cancer is going to beat us all up, but we are going to be stronger than this. Our marriage is going to get shaken, and we are going to get stressed, but we're bigger than this." You have to work

that much harder to make sure to find time, to find the moments, to just be able to sit in the same room and read the paper together.

## What do those of us who've had no experience with Down syndrome need to know?

I'd say you should deal with Gabe or any other person in his position in the same way you would deal with anybody else. Don't let the typical physical features that are associated with Down syndrome be any sort of indicator that you have to talk down to Gabriel or talk slower to Gabriel or direct any question for him to Rachel or myself or even to his younger brother.

## Why did you and your wife decide to homeschool your kids?

We had always talked about how great it would be to be able to go do a play for six weeks or shoot a film on location and be able to bring the whole family with us. Along the way we discovered the best way both our kids learned was through



the individualized attention homeschooling offers. They have become true independent learners.

### Does homeschooling make it hard for your boys to develop a social life outside the home?

People often assume that homeschooled children spend their entire day at home. That's not the case at all. They don't go to a central location five days a week, but they are out and about on field trips, volunteering, attending site classes—all with other homeschooled kids, so they have a peer group. Gabe had prom last year on the Queen Mary and is going again this year.

### It sounds like such a gift to have all this family time.

When things get hectic, Rachel and

I have to remind ourselves of that. We all are so incredibly lucky that if we don't have meetings or classes, we can have lunch together. I can go for a walk mid-morning with Cameron and Gabe. We're not bound by the same rules found in a typical brick and mortar school.

### Before we let you go, we have to ask ... what is it like working on Scandal?

It was a joy. Everyone is so incredibly grounded. Egos are all checked at the door. My dear friend, Executive Producer, Tom Verica sets the open tone. Jeff Perry, Kerry Washington, Tony Goldwyn—they're all team players. I'm very lucky they asked me to come play. ■



*Cullen will next be seen in the family film, The Dog Lover, opening across the country on July 8th. You can follow him on Twitter @cullendoug.*



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# The Importance of Saying Sorry

By Rebecca Meiser



Photo: Beth Segal

Jane's teenage daughter did not exactly have the best driving history. It took her three times to pass her driving test, and she'd recently acquired three new dents in her car—the origins of which she wasn't totally sure. So it was only natural that Jane would be nervous—and a little bit controlling and critical—when her daughter slipped into the driver's seat the other day. A little backseat coaching could only help her daughter, Jane figured.

But after gasping a bit too loudly over what Jane viewed as a particularly sharp right turn, her daughter turned to her and said: "Driving with you stresses me out. You pick on every little thing, and it doesn't help me drive better."

Even though the criticisms had come from a place of love and of genuine concern for her daughter's safety, Jane realized her daughter was right. So she apologized.

By recognizing her daughter's feeling, Jane ended up teaching a different—and arguably just as important—life lesson: the importance of owning up to your mistakes. "To know that you can make a mistake about something and fix it is one of the most important things you can teach your children," says Dr. Tamar Chansky, a suburban Philadelphia-based psy-

chologist and author of *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety*.

Owning up to one's mistakes is not an easy task, though—especially for parents. "We think that when we apologize, we lose things like our power and credibility, and that our children won't respect us anymore," says Chansky. "But it's actually 180 degrees from that. Teenagers are truth detectors. They are looking for sincerity. When you level with them, they will actually respect you more." And they, in turn, will feel more comfortable coming to you with their own slip-ups.

When it comes to apologies, words matter. Automatically saying you're sorry—without any sort of context—can backfire. "Your kids start thinking that 'sorry' is a simple do-over button that makes everything go away," says Dr. Jerry Weichman, an adolescent psychologist at the Hoag Neurosciences Institute in Newport Beach, CA and author of the teen survival guide, *How to Deal*. "But situations don't really get better unless you really own your mistake, take responsibility for the action, understand how the other person was affected, and apologize."

Deflecting the blame by saying things like, "I'm sorry, but you really should have been more careful," only fans the flames. "When you include a

'but' in your apology, it signals to the other person that you're not sincere in your apology," says Weichman. "They just hear you trying to justify and excuse your behavior, which can result in even more resentment and animosity."

Apologizing, at its best, should make the other person feel seen and understood. It can also provide an opening for a great conversation. "You can't have a comma or a semicolon in your apology. After you finish your apology, you can say, though, 'Can I tell you what was going on with me in that moment?'" says Chansky. Being open and vulnerable about your feelings and thought processes can help your child develop empathy and a larger worldview, and spark an intimate moment of connection.

When you apologize, you are not just teaching your child about the importance of accepting responsibility; you are also teaching about the process of forgiveness. "Ultimately, it does no good to harbor grudges," says Weichman. "It doesn't change the situation, it doesn't change how you feel. It just allows things to fester and grow and make you feel worse. The only way you can shed the bad things that occur in life is to forgive."

And all of that begins with a good apology. ■



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# Is Staying Home on Friday Night So Terrible?

By Lisa A. Beach



**M**y 15-year-old son and I have this push-pull relationship going on right now. Whenever I try to push a good idea (basic common sense) his way, he resists and pulls away. This yo-yo-ing gets tiresome and leads to lots of disagreements, but I understand it's all part of the teenage package.

However, of all the things my son and I disagree about—screen time, his attitude, the weather—I never thought we'd argue because—wait for it—I wanted him to have fun on a Friday night.

*What kind of a monster am I?*

Here's how it all went down: My stubborn sophomore basically planted himself in front of his Play Station most weekends during ninth grade. He didn't attend any social events other than soccer games and track meets because he was on the team.

"It's a transition year," everyone kept telling me.

"He'll come around," they said.

But when his tenth grade social life started down the same path, I put my foot down. It was homecoming weekend, packed with a Friday football game

and a Saturday dance. Getting him to attend the dance would be a hard sell, so I focused on the football game. True to form, he refused to go.

Now, there are worse problems than having your teenager want to stay home on a Friday night. I get it. But I wanted him to be a bigger part of the school community.

My usual ploy of appealing to his logic was an epic fail. "It will be the best game of the year!"

"You can leave at half-time if you're not having fun." And what I thought would hit pay dirt: "I'll give you money for candy and soda."

Getting nowhere fast with this kid. Finally, I tried another tactic. "Okay, you don't have to go to the football game, but if you stay home, you can't play video games."

Well, that was the shot heard 'round his teenage world.

"Are you kidding me?" he shouted. "That's so not fair! Why are you punishing me? No one I know goes to the football games." On and on he ranted.

My husband Kevin and I tried to reason with him (again), but this only made him dig his heels in.

That is, until Kevin's cell phone rang. It was his friend Todd, whose son Brandon is one of my son's best friends.

"Oh, Brandon's already at the football game?" Kevin asked loudly so my son could overhear. After getting a few more details, Kevin hung up.

We decided to press the issue one more time. We wanted our son to do more than just go to school. We wanted him to get involved.

"Fine, I'll go," my son relented as he ran upstairs to change his clothes.

Within five minutes, he was out the door, in the car, and on the way to his first high school football game. Three hours later when we picked him up, he was all smiles as he gave us a quick recap of the night.

We could have just let the issue slide, allowing our son to stay in his comfort zone. But we knew he needed a push, even if it was to get out and have some fun. ■

*Lisa Beach is a freelance writer, blogger, mother of two teenagers, and recovering homeschooler who lived to write about it. Visit her writer's website at [www.LisaBeachWrites.com](http://www.LisaBeachWrites.com).*



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*Must it always be about them? All About Me is a chance to talk about something other than your teen—finally.*



# Binge Watching

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman

I still remember my two college roommates who read fiction books *for pleasure* throughout the semester. I couldn't imagine ever getting myself to do that. I always felt like I should be studying or working or *something*. The idea of pleasure reading during those stressful years was not one I could get my head around. It felt way too indulgent.

Life is busy—a full-time job, volunteer commitments, stacks of books to be read, chores, driving kids. You know the drill.

Several years ago, my bestie mentioned *The Gilmore Girls* in conversation.

"What's that?" I piped up. She looked at me like I had six heads.

"Seriously? You love quippy conversations, drinking coffee, *talking* about coffee, and smart writing—I cannot believe you haven't seen this show. It's on Netflix—you should be watching it. Promise me you will start tonight."

"Suuuuure," I said hesitantly, already knowing that my post-midnight bedtime didn't need to be pushed even later. But even though the bags under my eyes had bags, I accepted the challenge.

About six months later, I watched the first episode, and I was hooked.

Two days later, I watched the second one. A week later, I watched the third episode, and now, two years later, I am finally in Season Three. Yep, two years later, Season Three. And, truth be told, I'm pretty proud of my progress.

That is, until last week, when Kid #1 returned from freshman year of college.

"What's your plan until you leave for your trip in 2 weeks?"

"The semester has been so busy. I am looking forward to just chilling. I heard *The Office* is a great show. I think I'm going to watch that."

"That sounds great—you deserve it. Enjoy."

That day I returned from work, to find said kid still in bed, computer on his lap, glasses on—telltale sign that no shower had been had, and probably not a meal eaten.

"How was your day?" I asked, plopping down next to him.

"Awesome. I've done nothing. I watched seven episodes of *The Office*—it's hilarious. Want to watch one with me?"

"Maybe later. I have to finish up some work." Headphones put back to their rightful position on his head, and I sauntered out.

Next day? Same story—except now he had finished Season One, and was moving on to Season Two.

Days Three and Four, finished up Season Two.

Day Five, cue up Season Three. And so on. For two weeks.

Now, the kid had a very busy semester. I get it. But two weeks straight watching a TV series? He had barely left the house.

"Dude, this is like an unpaid internship." I said to him one afternoon. He laughed.

That evening he was heading out to a friend's to housesit for the weekend for their dogs. And that's when it hit me—Zach was actually about to get *paid* to binge watch *The Office*. His unpaid internship just turned into the highly coveted *paid* internship. My kid was a superstar. I couldn't help but wonder whether Netflix would hire him next summer. They could only be impressed with his stellar performance.

Admittedly, I was a little bit—okay, very—jealous of his downtime. No work hanging over his head, no classes, job not starting for a few weeks. In a world that is swirling with texts, news, and emails, he had discovered indulgence.

The next night I returned from work and was supposed to be heading back out the door to a meeting. My son was in bed—same position. I had just recently asked him if he thought I should turn him so he wouldn't get bedsores.

He smiled his dimpled smile when I walked in his room.

"Want to watch an episode?" he asked, dimples and all. "I'm at the end of Season Three. You will love it, Mom."

I plopped down next to him, as he handed me a second pillow to put behind my head. Who could say no to that? I had so much to learn about binge-watching, and my kid had become the teacher. ■





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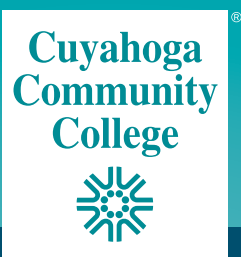
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