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Photo: Beth Segal

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July-August 2018 Volume 10, Issue 6

Your Teen for parents

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LOVE FROM OUR FANS...

"Thank you for the great work you do, @YourTeenMag!!"
—Liz Claman, anchor of *Countdown to the Closing Bell* on Fox Business @lizclaman

"Great information here for parents. If you have a teen and haven't checked out *Your Teen*, go take a look. It's a unique and incredibly informative publication. Good stuff."
—Catherine Pearlman, The Family Coach

"I just finished reading the May/June issue. Wow. Each issue's table of contents could be right out of a Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine conference. The sharing, the vulnerability of the writing, and the accessibility of the topics—all offered with affection, expertise, and the certainty that all of these challenges are shared. This labor of love is a beautiful publication."
—Elise Ellick, adolescent counselor at MetroHealth Medical Center

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Here's how to discuss it, and what limits to set.
bit.ly/summertimefreedom

Discipline
After they mess up, how can you rebuild trust?
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The top five worries of middle school boys.
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I remember the invincible innocence of being young.

Airplanes were beyond exciting. Rollercoasters were a thrill (especially the big, sudden drops). Snorkeling? Of course. My best story—I hitchhiked from Paris to Amsterdam with a friend. And no one would have ever called me a risk-taker.

Everything changed when I became a mother. I went from a very tame risk-taker to an anxiety-riddled worrywart. Now I'm a terribly nervous flyer because I think about the plane crashing. I hate when my kids are on these crazy rollercoasters because every summer there's at least one tragic story. The ocean has sharks. And hitchhiking—well, that would be unthinkable in today's world.

And yet, being alive is filled with everyday risks that make life worth living. We each make our own assessment of whether to take the risk. As parents, we want to protect our children. Often, we feel better when risk-taking teens use their "seatbelt," whatever that might mean in each situation.

My oldest daughter went to New Zealand with friends. She called to say hello; we had a brief conversation, and then she said, "Gotta go. I love you," and hung up. Half an hour later, she called to say that she had just gone bungee jumping. (She had kindly followed my request to tell me these stories after the event, but she had called to leave me with those words in case something bad happened.) For safety, she was tethered to a bungee cord.

My youngest son plays football. To manage the risk, he wears a helmet and pads.

My youngest daughter spent a semester in London. She determined that she needed to be braver, so she went to dinner and a movie alone. (That kind of risk is right up my alley.) She felt more secure with her phone.

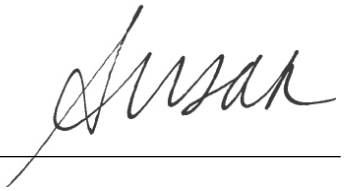
Sometimes we want to put the brakes on the risks our teens take, and sometimes we want to push our cautious kids (and even ourselves).

For me, the risk has been public speaking. The minute I stand up, my voice quivers and my brain goes blank. Several years ago, I decided to say yes whenever someone asked me to speak. I manage my nerves with note cards.

It's hard to know which risks are worth taking, and how we can manage those risks. That's up to each parent and teenager. But don't worry; our feature story on page 32 offers up some helpful advice for navigating this tricky territory.

We've also got loads of summer advice: how to manage those screens (theirs and ours) on vacation (page 54), what your teenagers learn when you drink your evening margarita(s) (page 44), whether to let your kids sleep in this summer (page 43), and much, much more.

Enjoy the read.

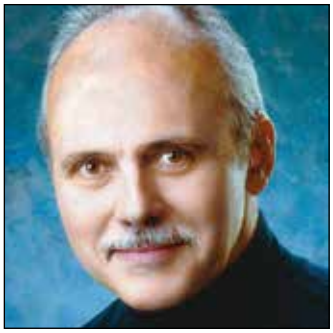


FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

DEBORAH BIAL
founder of The Posse Foundation, believes that the potential of teenagers cannot be measured by SAT scores and GPAs. On page 20, read about Posse's innovative program to identify and support future leaders.

DAVID GRANN
is a well-known writer for *The New Yorker* and the author of multiple bestselling books. For his thoughts on how to raise tween and teen readers, see our interview on page 56.

MELISSA JOULWAN
has been a rollergirl and a self-proclaimed "chubby nerd," but now she's a Crossfit enthusiast and creator of delicious paleo recipes. On page 17, learn how to make her quick tropical tacos with your teenager.



STEPHEN SROKA
is familiar with tough situations—he grew up in the projects as the son of a single parent, and was thought unfit for college. Now a professor, speaker, and educational consultant, he shares his wisdom on suicide prevention—see page 40.

WE ASKED TEENS...

Describe a time when you were proud of your parent.

I was proud of my dad when, after finding out he had a severe nerve condition, he went on a mission trip and served others, even when he was in pain.

Grace, *Knoxville, TN*

When my dad was going through horrible, debilitating cancer, my mom never left his side. I'm proud of Dad for how brave he was and I'm proud of Mom for how compassionate and strong she was.

Eva-Joy, *Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

I was proud of my mom when she got her new job a couple weeks ago. I think it's really exciting and she totally deserves it.

Madison, *Shaker Heights, OH*

When my parents stood up for me in more than one case.

Whanita, *Bloemfontein, Free State, South Africa*

When my mom didn't yell at me for kicking another kid—I thought he deserved it. She was very understanding.

Grace, *Owasso, OK*

I'm proud of my mom for getting a second divorce because husband #2 turned out to be as toxic as husband #1 and she really doesn't deserve that kind of treatment. She chose to do what would fulfill her most, and I respect that.

Aly, *Chicago, IL*

I was very proud of my mom when she graduated law school!

Amanda, *Clinton, UT*

I am proud of my parents because my mom has had a lot of medical issues in recent years and has still continued to be a really involved mother, and my dad has patiently cared for her throughout this time.

Emma, *St. Louis, MO*

My mom danced in a talent show two years in a row! It was so out of her comfort zone, but she stuck with it and pulled off an amazing performance each time!

Jeanne-Marie, *Cranston, RI*

#ParentHack: *A Vacation from Nagging*

Recently, we planned a family vacation. The occasion happened to be to celebrate my birthday.

I knew even before we left home that I was going to be irritated the entire week. I was going to be doing dishes the whole time, asking my kids to set the table, asking again when they didn't do it, and spending my days being generally annoyed.

Even I hate how I sound when I get irritated and start nagging. Who wants to spend a week mad at the very people you are trying to enjoy?

I thought back to a vacation we took with my extended family. While some of us did all the work of cooking, getting meals on the table, and cleaning up dishes, other family members didn't lift a finger. We workers felt that our requests for help were simply ignored, and we were getting angry.

So we came up with a solution. We made a chore chart with every person's name on it. We posted it on the door to the kitchen. Before every meal, each person was responsible for making sure their assigned task was completed.

And—surprise!—it worked like a charm. Everyone could go check their task and make sure it was done before mealtime. And to my wonder, everyone just did it. Without anyone nagging.

So before we left for this vacation, I told my family we were doing a chore chart again. "I'm going to print out a chart with everyone's job assignments on it."

Their response? "Great! We like when you make a chart so we don't have to hear you nagging."

Turns out no one likes to hear me nag.

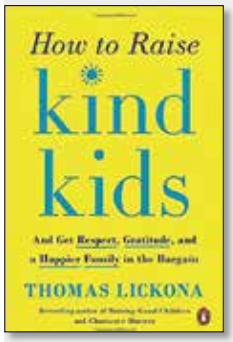
—Susan Borison

Want to share your story? Email your idea to editor@yourteenmag.com.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

How to Raise Kind Kids: And Get Respect, Gratitude, and a Happier Family in the Bargain

In his new book, developmental psychologist Thomas Lickona tells readers up front, "This is a book about kindness." Lickona has been called "the father of modern character education" for good reason. He is the author of eight books on character development, as well as the founding director of the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility) at SUNY Cortland, where he was a professor of childhood education for 40 years.



Parents and educators looking for a practical framework for instilling and nurturing kindness will find it here. With the tone of a contemporary Mr. Rogers, Lickona emphasizes throughout his book that kindness matters. He backs up his advice with decades of wisdom and research, along with real stories of families he's worked with.

His recipe for raising kind kids includes traditional staples like good communication, family meetings, household chores, consistent boundaries, high expectations, and firm but fair consequences. While some of his attitudes feel outdated in an era of smartphones and social media, his core message is simple: Encourage altruism, teach by example, and be available to your children.

Lickona's back-to-basics approach offers a solid (albeit old-fashioned) parenting guide, and the emphasis on traditional values will resonate with many parents. An extensive list of resources, including conversation-starters, reading lists, quotes, and family project recommendations makes *How to Raise Kind Kids* a fine addition to the parenting toolkit.

— Kristina Wright

By the Numbers...

45%
of 17-year-olds read for fun only once or twice a year.
COMMON SENSE MEDIA

Summer—that is, between Memorial Day and Labor Day—is the deadliest season for drivers aged **15-20**.
FACTRETRIEVER.COM

More than **43%** of American teens had a summer job in 2016.
BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

The average American plans to use only **8** of their **14** vacation days during the summer.
AMERICANEXPRESS.COM

75%
of LGBT youth say that most of their peers have no issues with them being LGBT.
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Time to Relax

Summer means sleeping in.

Wicked Sheets Moisture Wicking Bed Sheets

Moms, we feel ya. We wake up sweaty at 2 a.m., too. Get a comfy night's sleep with these moisture-control sheets that keep you cool and dry all night.
$129.95-$204.95 *wickedsheets.com*

catstudio Collegiate Collection Pillow

New college freshman or a recent grad? Choose from over 200 designs for the perfect hand-embroidered pillow. Whether it's to decorate a dorm room, a new apartment, or Dad's man cave, you know it will be just perfect.
$168 *catstudio.com*

Casa & Co Custom Printed Linen Pillow

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From $54 *casaandcodesign.com*

Dreampad Pillow

This soft, lush medium-density microfiber pillow is flexible enough for stomach, side, or back sleeping. And how cool is this: it features Intrasound technology that plays soothing music controlled by an app. You can fall asleep to music without disturbing your sleep partner.
$129.00-$179.00 *dreampadsleep.com*

Hey, I Want That!

Grab one (or three) of these pocket-size goodies.

A La Mode Ice Cream

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$5.49-5.99 *alamodeshoppe.com*

Dew Puff Sponge

Summer is a time for showing off beautiful, healthy skin. Gently exfoliate with these face- and body-cleansing natural sponges that are 100% plant-based.
$8 *dewpuff.com*

Boutique Academia "She Who Dares, Wins" Necklace

Academically inspired jewelry for science and arts lovers. Inspirational, beautiful, and unusual—just like you!
$24.99 *boutiqueacademia.com*

Around the House

Summertime, and the living is easy.

Precidio Multi Flask 7-in-1

What do you feel like drinking: hot coffee, protein shake, iced tea? Hot or cold, the Multi Flask can hold whatever beverage you want, wherever you want to take it. Boom!
$44.99 *multiflasking.com*

AeroPress Coffee Maker

Enough with the K-Cups! You can make a deeply flavorful cup of coffee in one minute, with just a quick rinse to clean up. Ideal for the coffee lover in your life.
$34.99 *aeropressinc.com*

Case + Drift Dry Bag

Ever throw a wet swimsuit or muddy shoes in a plastic bag and cross your fingers that it doesn't leak into your luggage? Never again with the Drift Wet Bag. Pack it with wet clothes, toiletries, or valuables to keep everything dry and safe on your next trip.
$40 *caseanddrift.com*

Airfree Air Purifier

If there is an allergy sufferer in your family, you want the air in your house to be as clean as possible. This purifier eliminates the bacteria and allergens in a room in a very short time. Plus, it's silent and maintenance-free.
$299.99 *airfree.com*

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Smart and stylish buys

Udoq 400 Docking Station

Charge all your devices at the same time in one handy docking station. You can even wall mount it! Available in Android, Apple, or universal versions.
From $147.70 *udoq.com*

Polaroid Snap Touch Camera

A must-have for teens to capture fun with friends. Instantly print every photo you snap—and you can even edit and add filters before you print. And, yep, you can upload photos to your phone or social media, too. Your mom's Polaroid couldn't do that.
$179.99 *meetpolaroid.com*

Just Because It's Fun

Bye-bye, backpacks—we're on break.

RampShot
Grab a couple friends, and head outside to play a game that inspires physical activity and hours of entertainment. Take it to the beach, the family reunion or the backyard.
$59.99 *rampshot.com*

CherJo'Klé Liquid Lipstick
This lipstick is long-lasting, waterproof, smudge-resistant, and easy to apply—and it comes in 12 vibrant colors. Summer is fun, and your lipstick should be, too.
$18 *cherjokle.net*

Strong Self(ie) Subscription Box
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$59.95 *strongselfie.com*

Quarto Knows Scratch & Create Patterns Art Book
Is your artsy kid always looking for fun and creative projects? They'll lose themselves in these intricate designs of spirals, tangles, and geometric patterns. Etch and scratch unique illustrations with the specially designed stylus.
$19.99 *quartoknows.com*

Tips for Tastier Veggies

Healthy teens need vegetables, but few eat enough.

Photo: Beth Segal

Dumped from a can. Heated in a microwave bag. Swimming in butter or salt. These methods of preparation represent the average parent's veggie repertoire, says registered dietitian Sheri Allen, who also holds a master's degree in public health.

Parents will drag their teens to Allen for an "eat your veggies" lecture, she says, yet "often it's the parents who don't like, or don't eat, a variety of veggies."

Teenagers are often still counting on parents to take the lead when it comes to nutrition and meals. "The teen will say to me, 'I don't do the grocery shopping,'" says Allen. It may be helpful to take a family approach, and to involve the teen in both the shopping and the cooking.

But what should families buy and cook to increase that veggie intake?

In a recent series of taste tests, Penn State researchers discovered that high school students passed over plain oil-and-salt veggies, preferring those that had been seasoned with custom blends of herbs and spices. That was true even if the seasonings were new to them.

Only 2 percent of teens eat the recommended amount of veggies, and that's a big issue, Allen says, because a child's growth hits fast forward during adolescence. Not only are they growing taller, she says, but "their internal organs are doubling in size, and they are gaining a majority of their maximum bone density, as well as increased lean body mass and body fat to set themselves up for adulthood."

And while healthy carbs, lean protein, and healthy fats are important, it's the vitamins and minerals in fruits and vegetables that drive this whole growth process, she says. So, it's worth adding some creativity to your cooking methods to get those vegetables in.

Whatever a teen's current approach to eating vegetables, it's likely that they (and their parents) need to be eating more of them. So, it's worth working towards veggies that are less dull—and more delicious.

—Cathie Ericson

EXPERT ADVICE FOR TASTIER VEGGIES:

- ➔Cooking veggies in broth instead of water (use bone broth to boost the nutrition factor even more)
- ➔Experimenting with new-to-you vegetables and recipes
- ➔Adding flavorful plants while cooking, such as garlic, onion, ginger, and shallots
- ➔Tossing veggies with spices and herbs, which can also provide their own important nutrients
- ➔Trying out new flavor combinations—taco seasoning on corn? It just might work.

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Rideshare Rules

Are they old enough for Lyft and Uber?

On a recent vacation with two other families, we parents decided we deserved a night out. But our teens felt they did, too, so we sent them on their merry way in a Lyft. We're not unique in this; it's an oh-so-tempting option, especially for working parents unable to shuttle teens to every rehearsal and sports practice. But is it a good idea?

Let's start with the basics: It's against company rules for Uber or Lyft drivers to pick up minors. Yet drivers often do anyway, meaning parents may think of ridesharing services as a viable answer to teen transportation dilemmas.

If parents do want to allow ride-sharing services, the first issue to consider is safety, says Phyllis Fagell, a licensed clinical professional counselor at Sheridan Middle School in Washington, D.C., and the author of the forthcoming book *Middle School Matters*.

And with a recent CNN investigation reporting more than 100 incidents of sexual assault by Uber and Lyft drivers over the last four years, safety considerations are no small matter.

As with any independent travel by teens, set some ground rules, says Fagell. She was proud of her kids, ages 16 and 14, who opted to cancel a rideshare because the car didn't have a license plate.

"Tell your teens that when something doesn't feel right, they should always go with their gut, even if it feels impolite," Fagell says. Teens should also know how to remain alert and assertive, as they would when traveling anywhere without an adult—whether that's in a traditional taxicab, in a rideshare, on foot, or on public transportation.

Parents ultimately make the call whether to allow teens to take rideshares. But Fagell does recommend that, at a minimum, parents require teens to ride with at least one other passenger. "There's always something to be said for traveling in groups," she says.

—Cathie Ericson

Dealing with Difficult Adults

As teens mature into adults, they need to learn how to deal with difficult people on their own. Whether it's a demanding teacher, coach, or boss, difficult people are simply a fact of life. Here are some tips to share with teens.

- **Stay calm.** When you feel yourself starting to get irritated by someone, slow your breathing. Take several deep breaths in and exhale slowly. This can measurably lower your heart rate and blood pressure.

- **Be respectful.** No matter how a person is treating you, being rude or contemptuous will not help resolve the situation—and could escalate it. Acting polite and respectful goes a long way. Follow the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

- **Listen.** Listening is the most important step in dealing with unreasonable people. Everyone wants to feel heard and acknowledged. Focus on what the other person is saying, not what you want to say next. Try to appreciate their point of view. What is making them uncooperative or angry? Is there anything you can do to meet their needs to resolve the situation?

- **Look for help.** Look around to see if someone is close by who might be able to help. If you're at work and there's an irate customer, quickly scan to see if a colleague is close by.

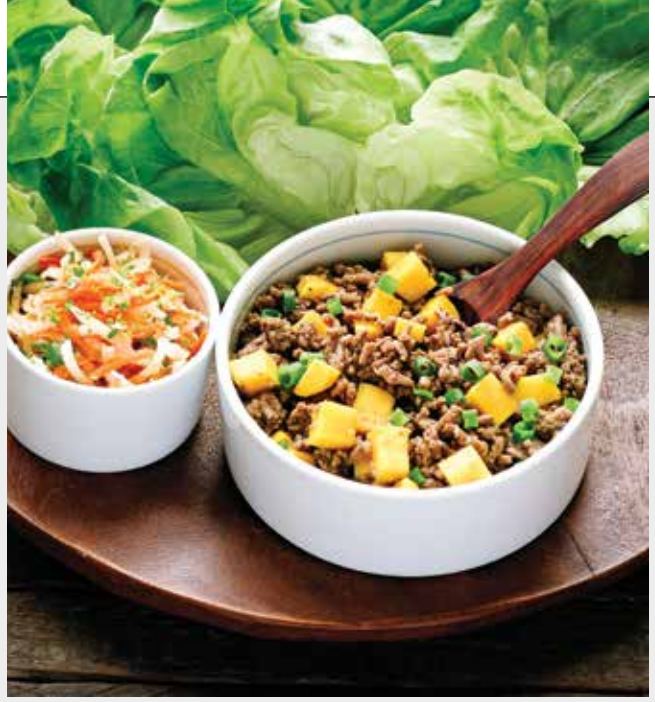
- **Let the other person be right.** This one is hard. No one likes to be wrong. But if you can let go of the need to be right, that person may be less defensive or difficult. Repeat back the points you think a person is making, and acknowledge the emotions they seem to be expressing. Say, "Tell me more so I can understand better." Avoid smiling, as this may look like you are mocking the person.

- **Don't be defensive.** It's normal to want to defend yourself. But if the other person is emotional or confrontational, being defensive won't help. Another person's emotions may not even be about you, so don't take it personally. Raising your voice, pointing your finger, or getting angry will add fuel to the fire. Use a low, calm voice. Don't talk over the person. Wait until the person takes a breath, and then speak.

- **Say "I'm sorry."** Apologizing or saying "I'm going to try to fix this" can go a long way towards defusing many difficult situations. When apologizing, avoid saying, "I'm sorry if you felt upset by this," which can suggest that the other person was overly sensitive. Instead, apologies should focus on your own actions.

- **Tell someone else.** After the situation is over, talk to someone about what happened. Dealing with jerks can be upsetting. Talking about it with a third party can help you get rid of any stress you are feeling.

—Jane Parent



Prep this Summery Meal with your Teenager

Most of us don't want to spend all our free time in the kitchen, especially at the end of an already-busy day. But quick doesn't have to mean boring.

Best-selling paleo cookbook author Melissa Joulwan's latest cookbook, *Well Fed Weeknights: Complete Paleo Meals in 45 Minutes or Less*, features irresistible recipes inspired by takeout classics, food trucks, and cuisines around the world.

All the recipes are paleo-friendly, so they contain no grains, dairy, legumes, or soy, and every meal is thoroughly tested and easy to make with affordable ingredients you'll find at your regular grocery store. No extra trips to specialty food stores required.

To make these colorful, delicious tacos, ground pork is quickly stir-fried with mango and island spices, and a crisp slaw rounds out the meal. "The contrast of flavors and textures is what makes some foods so irresistible," says Joulwan. "They're the perfect balance of sweet and hot, just like a day on the beach."

"Don't be afraid of the jalapeno!" she adds. "It's more flavorful than fiery, and the mango, carrots, and jicama keep the heat in check."

TROPICAL TACOS WITH JICAMA SLAW

Serves 2–4, Total time: 30–35 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

Slaw

1 large carrot
½ small jicama
1 lime
¼ cup fresh cilantro

Tacos

2 tsp. coconut oil
1 medium yellow onion
1 medium jalapeño, seeded and sliced
2 cloves garlic
1 tsp. powdered ginger
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground black pepper
½ tsp. ground allspice
1 ½ pounds ground pork
1 ripe mango
4 scallions
1 tbsp. coconut aminos*
1 head butter or Boston lettuce

**Coconut aminos are a soy-free substitute for soy sauce made from coconut; you may also use gluten-free soy sauce in this recipe.*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Make the slaw. Peel the carrot and jicama. Use the shredder attachment of a food processor to grate the vegetables, and then place them in a large bowl. Zest and juice the lime; add it to the bowl. Mince the cilantro; add it to the bowl, and toss to mix the slaw.

2. Cook the pork. Warm the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. While it heats, mince the onion and jalapeño. Add the onion and jalapeño to the pan with a pinch of salt, toss to coat them in oil, and cook until soft (5–7 minutes).

While the onion cooks, peel and crush the garlic, then place it in a small bowl with the ginger, salt, pepper, and allspice. Crumble the pork into the skillet and cook, breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon, until it's no longer pink.

While the meat cooks, peel and dice the mango. Add the spices to the meat and stir to combine. Slice the dark green part of the scallions, and set aside. Add the mango and coconut aminos to the pan, and stir again. Let the meat flavors meld, about 5 minutes, while you wash and separate the lettuce leaves.

3. Serve. Put the ingredients in big bowls, family style, letting your dining companions make their own tacos with the lettuce leaves.

Variations

- Replace the ground pork with ground chicken or turkey.
- Try pineapple in place of mango.

Cooking Tips

- Shred the veggies for the slaw in advance and store them in an airtight container in the fridge.
- When it's time to eat, add the lime and cilantro to the slaw and cook the pork.

The Case for Sports Sampling

Healthier kids avoid playing the same sport year-round.

By **Lisa L. Lewis**

Photo: Beth Segal

Fourteen-year-old Peach Salsbury of Alameda, California, plays on three basketball teams, with up to six games a week plus practices. "Basketball has become the center of her universe for everything," her mom, Sylvia, says, adding that the girls on her travel team have played together for years and spend time together off the court too. "They see themselves as athletes and as a family," she adds.

"Her confidence from it and her sense of commitment are amazing," Sylvia says.

But she also acknowledges that tournaments for Peach's travel team, which take place up to four weekends a month, dominate their lives.

SPECIALIZATION IS ON THE RISE

Peach's level of participation isn't unique: A study presented at the 2017 meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons noted that 45 percent of high school athletes now specialize in just one sport, often pursuing it year-round. Youth sports in the United States is now a $15 billion industry, offering seemingly endless opportunities for club-level teams, personal coaches, and training technologies to help kids excel at their chosen sport.

Tommy John, a sports chiropractor and author of *Minimize Injury, Maximize Performance: A Sports Parent's Survival Guide*, refers to this trend as "the snowballing of sport," noting that it leads many teens and their parents to think that if they don't take advantage of these resources, they'll be left behind.

As a result, kids can develop overuse injuries—something that John sees regularly, and at in-

creasingly earlier ages, at his practice in San Diego. "The youngest was nine," he says. "He'd injured the growth plate in his shoulder from playing baseball year-round."

John is the son and namesake of former Major League Baseball legend Tommy John, for whom the "Tommy John" elbow ligament surgery is named. Although the surgery was originally for professional baseball players, John notes that the majority of the surgeries are now performed on teens with injuries from excessive pitching.

And it isn't just baseball players: John sees players with overuse injuries in many other sports, too. "It's an across-the-board epidemic," he says. "Playing one single sport isn't a balanced situation. It causes excessive repetitive stress to certain areas and overtrains certain muscles while undertraining others."

RETHINKING TEEN ATHLETICS

John and other experts recommend that kids avoid specializing in just one sport and switch to another activity when the season is over. The Aspen Institute's Project Play initiative, which focuses on the role of sport in building healthy communities, calls this "sport sampling" and notes that it's a key way to help avoid burnout and keep kids active.

Jon Solomon, editorial director for Project Play and The Aspen Institute's Sports & Society initiative, says this approach starts with finding the right coach early on—someone who understands the pitfalls of overspecialization and isn't setting unrealistic expectations for players.

And what if the coach and the player aren't in sync? "You may be better off in the long run by taking a break or trying a different sport," Solomon says. "As you grow, your interests may change, and your body may change."

Even kids who've homed in on a favorite sport can show their commitment in other ways than playing year-round. John suggests approaching the coach to let them know what you're doing in the off-season.

"Maybe it's coming in with an action plan based on end-of-the-season feedback to work on eye-hand coordination or general strength," he says. "Maybe it's reading a book about grit and tenacity. Or maybe it's playing another sport."

For kids who are worried they may miss out on the social aspects, John notes that they'll likely find similar opportunities in other sports or in non-sport activities. He also points out that with all the research about overuse injuries, kids may find they're not the only ones choosing to opt out. "Before, they might have been seen as an outlier, but not anymore," he says. ■

Q&A ...with Deborah Bial

SAT scores and GPAs can only tell colleges a tiny bit about the ability and potential of kids. So Deborah Bial founded The Posse Foundation, an extraordinarily inventive program to identify overlooked-but-standout kids and get them to elite colleges and beyond in a supportive cohort.

Tell us about the history of Posse.
In the 1980s I was working at City Kids Foundation in New York, a kind of after-school program. There was a kid—a former student—who said he never would have dropped out of college if he'd had a "posse" with him. I thought that was a smart idea. Why not send kids to college in a group? They would be a posse so they could back each other up.

That is how it started, and Vanderbilt University was the first school we partnered with. They took a chance on a program that had no track record. There was no evidence that this would work.

How has Posse evolved since its early days?
Today, Posse is really a program that has social justice at its core. It is not just a program about supporting at-risk kids so they can graduate from college. It's about identifying kids who we think can probably become senators, CEOs, entrepreneurs, and college presidents.

What sort of student would be a fit for Posse?
I'll give you Shirley as an example. She is a Dominican kid who grew up in Brooklyn. Her dad drove a Yellow Taxi. Mom worked in a factory. Shirley gets into the first Posse—she had terrible SAT scores and would otherwise have never been admitted into Vanderbilt. She goes to Vanderbilt, graduates with honors, gets her doctorate in clinical psychology from

Duke University. She became the dean of the college at Middlebury, which is a top ten school, and recently became the president of Ithaca College.

That is what we are looking for. We knew there were these amazing, smart kids out there, and there was no reason they shouldn't do really well.

How big is Posse now?

We operate out of 10 cities. We have 56 partner colleges and universities. This year 750 kids will win a Posse scholarship to one of those schools.

How selective are you?

17,000 kids were nominated this year for the 700 spots. We have a pretty elaborate process called the Dynamic Assessment Process. It is a three-month interviewing process.

In a city like New York, we have between three and four thousand nominations. Someone has said, look at this kid, she is fantastic. She could dominate at Vanderbilt but won't show up on the radar because she didn't have good SAT scores, or whatever the reason is.

We set them up in a large group interview, a hundred students at a time. All are participating—building objects out of Legos, creating a discussion in their peer group, or making a public service or policy announcement in front of everyone.

We are looking for these traits and qualities that we think predict persistence and success. Things that you would look for if you were hiring someone for a leadership position in a company—public speaking, ability to work in a team, problem-solving, leadership—all these things that don't show up on an SAT score.

Could an introvert come into that room and still rise to the top?

Maybe, but we definitely miss kids. Every tool misses kids. The SATs miss kids, obviously, and this helps get kids that the SATs miss. We are really looking for kids who can be motivated to go be superstars. Not just succeed—be superstars. So out of this first round, we only bring back half of them.

Is that devastating?

I think it's the opposite of devastating. It's not like a job interview where you get rejected. They are with a hundred of their peers and are thrilled to be nominated, and it's really fun. They leave taking all this information about all these colleges. It's educational and inspirational. It builds self-esteem and lets them know they can do this. They leave with the opposite feeling of rejection. They know thousands of kids didn't get called back, so it's okay. And they can write on their college applications that they were a finalist.

So most of these kids who don't make it are still college-bound?

Yes, we are definitely focused on college-bound kids. It's a misconception that Posse is just for poor, at-risk, minority kids. We want diversity but diversity is not a synonym for minority or poor. And there are a lot of programs in the United States that define themselves based on a deficit, whatever that is. We are the opposite. We are a strength-based program that is looking for kids who are smart, talented, creative, and have potential to go be leaders. ■

Interview by Susan Borison

HathawayBrown

Girls K–12 / Coed Early Childhood
Shaker Heights, Ohio

67
institutions in
23 states and
3 countries

80%
admitted to their top-choice school
or a top choice, if ranked by group

$16M
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48%
admitted to a Top 30 University
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The American University of Paris
Boston College
Boston University
Brown University
University of California, Berkeley
Carnegie Mellon University
Case Western Reserve University (4)
Chapman University
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Claremont McKenna College
Clark Atlanta University
Clemson University
Colby College
Colgate University
Columbia University
Cornell University (2)
Davidson College
University of Dayton (2)
DePaul University
Dickinson College
Drexel University
Elon University (2)
Emory University (5)
Fordham University
Franklin and Marshall College
George Washington University (2)
Georgetown University (2)
University of Georgia
Harvard University
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Indiana University
John Carroll University
Johns Hopkins University
Kenyon College
Lehigh University
Miami University (6)
University of Michigan (5)
Michigan State University
Middlebury College
*New York University **
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Ohio University
The Ohio State University (4)
University of Pennsylvania (2)
Pomona College
Purdue University (2)
Princeton University
University of Rhode Island
Rochester Institute of Technology
Saint Louis University
Seattle University
Skidmore College
University of Southern California (2)
University of St. Andrews, Scotland
Syracuse University (2)
Trinity College
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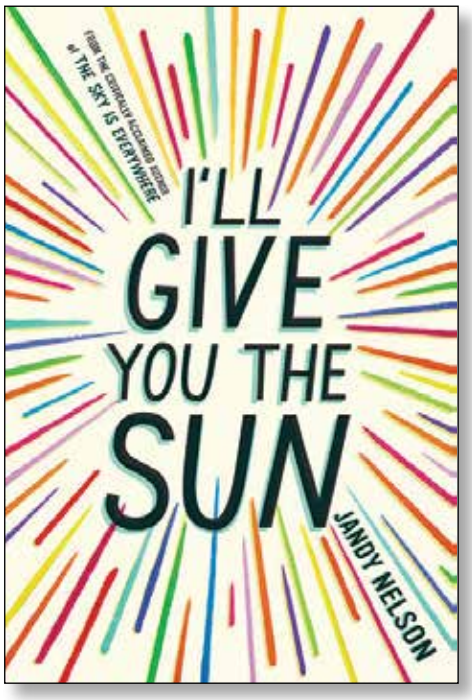
I'll Give You the Sun

Jandy Nelson's award-winning YA novel delivers love, connection, and human frailty—along with a surprising twist.



TEEN REVIEW

I received the book *I'll Give You the Sun* from my aunt about a year ago, and it has been one of my favorite novels ever since. It has a beautiful balance of character development and story, and Noah and Jude (who are twins) are such different characters, and it all makes for a wonderful, harmonious, and relatable story.

I'll Give You the Sun is a unique book in the sense that not only does the narrator switch back and forth between the two main characters, but the timeline alternates along with the narrator. Jude and Noah's voices are so different yet complementary. They push the plot along, keeping the reader guessing until the big reveal at the end of the book.

Noah's story takes place when he and Jude are 13 years old, and Jude's story follows up when they are 16. Their stories come together at these different times to frame, and later explain, what happens to characters in both future and past, resulting in a very rich and complex storyline.

The characters aren't lacking in depth, either. Noah is a talented artist struggling with bullies and his emerging sexuality, and Jude has regrets about her past and lives according to her dead grandmother's superstitions. They both have relatable and surprising experiences as they navigate their teen years. Neither Noah nor Jude is perfect—in fact, they are far from it, but that's just what makes their characters remarkable yet easy to understand.

I'll Give You the Sun manages to tackle difficult subject matter cleverly and successfully. It also has elements reminiscent of the book *Simon vs. the Homo Sapien Agenda*, popularized by the recent film "Love, Simon," so I would certainly recommend it to fans of that movie.

I'll Give You the Sun takes many subjects and puts them all into a format that is both unconventional and fascinating. It's a book that, based on my experience, readers would enjoy immensely.

Mina Jones is an eighth grader at Haas Hall Academy in Fayetteville, AR. She is Jess Lahey's niece.

PARENT REVIEW

Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* was recommended to me by a friend, and I was immediately drawn into the book's world of smart, interesting, and engaging characters. I've probably purchased 15 copies of this book in the past year, and every person I've given it to, adult and teen alike, has adored it.

The central characters and narrators, Noah and Jude, are twins with secrets. For most of their lives, Noah and Jude were close friends, connected by blood, artistic talent, and their quirky family. Something—at first, the reader does not know what—has come between them, however, and their relationship has changed. Noah and Jude are no longer close, no longer trust each other, and have lost faith in the bonds that hold their family together.

I fell in love with Noah immediately, as his character struggles to conceal and understand his homosexuality and artistic talents while maintaining a sense of humor about the futility of trying to bend the world to his expectations.

Noah yearns to be an artist. His understanding of the world and of the people around him are framed in terms of portraits, visual descriptions that fill Noah's mental gallery. We pass by portraits of shame, humiliation, fear, yearning, and love, and through these descriptions, develop a clear picture of Noah and his life.

Jude, however, defies mere visual description. Jude doesn't want to be seen by Noah or by the reader, and, consequently, remains a mystery to all of us. Where Noah shows, Jude tells, but only what she wants people to know—and then, only when she's ready.

I was impatient, I have to admit, as I read *I'll Give You the Sun*. I wanted answers that would help me understand what caused Noah and Jude to lose each other when they should have been each other's closest allies.

According to author Jandy Nelson's website, one of her favorite quotes is by Virginia Woolf, from the novel *To the Lighthouse*: "The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark."

Don't fret, faithful reader: Noah and Jude's revelations do come, eventually, in the form of small illuminations, and they are well worth your patience and effort.

Jess Lahey is a teacher and the author of The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed.

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Advice to Teens: Keep Your Options Open!

Exploring a wide range of interests is a smart move for teens in a rapidly changing world.

By Jen Jones Donatelli

Photo: Beth Segal

As the parent of a teenager, you may have certain ideas about how the next four to six years of their life will unfold. Perhaps you envision your child attending your alma mater or following in your footsteps at work. (Perhaps you fantasize about them being able to pay their own cell phone bill.)

Here's a little food for thought: The traditional linear career path is swiftly becoming a thing of the past. Research shows that people now change jobs an average of seven times throughout their lives—and tomorrow's job market will likely have opportunities we can't even fathom today.

"Imagine just 10 years ago how different the transportation and hospitality industries were—Uber and Airbnb didn't yet exist," says Lori Varlotta, president of Hiram College. "It's important to anticipate those kinds of changes so that high school and college graduates are prepared for an ever-changing and very exciting world."

Varlotta believes that the best way to do that is through a "broad, liberal arts course of study that focuses on change, adaptability, and flexibility," rather than being laser-focused on one specific area.

If this sounds like good news to you as a parent whose teen has absolutely no idea what to do with their life, you're in good company.

Get Off the Path

"It's so easy today to get put on a path that you follow just because you are good at it, or because it's what everyone does," says California mom Dana Baker-Williams. "Children need to explore, be curious, play, and try new things—whether that's a sport, a type of book, a food, or a language."

Baker-Williams's 17-year-old daughter is a high school senior about to embark on the college process, and her 19-year-old son is a sophomore in college.

"Neither of my kids knew what they wanted to study, and as a family, we embraced that," says Baker-Williams.

Far from feeling anxious about this, they encouraged their kids to continue exploring a wide range of interests at college. For them, a liberal arts approach made the most sense.

Explore the Possibilities

Varlotta fully supports that concept. The majority of Hiram students start their college experience undeclared, and they are in fact encouraged to wait until sophomore year to declare a major.

"If you focus too specifically on a single field, it's very easy to land your first job as a 22-year-old, but it might be harder to land different jobs at ages 28, 33, 45, and 50," says Varlotta. "By teaching critical thinking and real-world problem solving, students are prepared for the kinds of jobs we don't even have names for right now."

David Gennis, a psychotherapist specializing in child, adolescent, and family therapy, recommends parents endorse a well-rounded education that explores the arts and movement alongside STEM study. He firmly believes that nurturing such exploration leads to better adaptability and a broader skill set that includes time management, teamwork, positive socialization, problem-solving, and conflict resolution.

"I encourage parents to allow their children to explore different interests so that they may identify what they like and potentially what they are good at doing," advises Gennis. As he has seen with his own two boys, "parenting is a journey, and so is adolescence. There are 100 different routes that an individual may take to reach their ultimate destination."

For parents feeling overwhelmed by the many paths available to their teens, Varlotta encourages taking a step back and helping their child identify what drives them to pursue certain interests.

"Parents spend a lot of precious time having students think about *what*—what classes will I take, what activities will I engage in? But having students think about the *why* is even more important," says Varlotta. "That is what will help not only lead to a career, but a calling." ■

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Pool Parties, Picnics, and… SAT Prep

Summer's slower pace makes it a good time to get it done.

By **Nancy O'Connor**

Chris O'Brien's dream summer looked like this: vacationing at the beach, working at a restaurant, and hanging out with friends. Not pictured: studying for the SAT. But his PSAT scores "weren't good enough," he says, so he agreed to SAT tutoring over the summer break. While it wasn't his ideal summer activity, it did pay off. "The results were huge. I improved my SAT test score by 300 points, which gave me scholarship opportunities at several colleges."

"Summer is a good time for test prep because students have fewer conflicts with their academics, sports teams, and other extracurriculars," says Anathea Simpkins, who manages tutoring and test prep programs for Sylvan Learning. Summer prep is especially helpful for incoming seniors like Chris, she says, "because concepts from the junior year are still fresh in their minds and they haven't experienced summer learning loss. Also, senior year can be very hectic."

Testing: One, Two, Three

Taking practice tests is the best way for high schoolers to become familiar with the SAT and ACT college entrance exams. It can give them an early read on how they might score and help uncover areas they need to work on. Without the pressures of school, your teen may find it easier to carve out the three-hour blocks of time needed to complete the practice tests. Summer's longer, lazier days can also open up more time for pleasure reading—which helps with vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

Is your teen the type to take online practice tests independently? If so, their high school guidance office should have test prep materials to share, and numerous study resources are available online. If not, lining up a tutor or enrolling in a test prep course with personalized support may be the way to go.

Libraries and bookstores also typically carry SAT and ACT study guides. But don't be tempted to dig up your older child's SAT workbook, because the SAT underwent substantial changes in 2016:

- The content more closely aligns with high school coursework
- The essay is optional
- Each question offers four answers to choose from instead of five
- There are now two math sections
- One math section must be completed without a calculator

Which Test and How Many Times?

The purpose of the SAT or ACT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college. The more challenging the college or university, the higher the test score they will want. Not all colleges require standardized test scores, but those that do typically accept either the SAT or ACT with no preference for one over the other.

"In deciding which test your teen should take, either one is fine," says Simpkins. "The schools can convert SAT scores to equivalent ACT scores, and vice versa." Many students will take both tests to see if they perform better on one than the other, and then retake that test to try for a higher score a second (or even third) time.

Tracey Guild advises students to send at least two sets of scores to colleges when they apply. "Many colleges will super-score their SAT and ACT scores," says Guild, assistant director of undergraduate admissions at Fairfield University in Connecticut. "If a student submits more than one SAT score, we will take the highest score from each section and combine them to get the highest overall score."

To Test or Not to Test?

Like an increasing number of colleges and universities, Fairfield University is test-optional. "This means we do not require either test," Guild says. "However, if a student does submit their test scores, we will use that as another part of the application to help us with the decision-making process."

While standardized tests aren't at the top of anyone's summer fun list, using these months to prepare can lessen the stress of the tests in the long run. As Simpkins says, "These may be the most important tests your student will ever take. The more familiar your teen is with the tests, the more comfortable and confident they will be about taking them." ■

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Lean In or Let Go?

Think twice about meddling in your student's middle school schedule.

By Gail O'Connor

When my son was ready to join the big leagues of middle school, I worried. How would he juggle so many classes? And now that he'd have more say in choosing them, what if he picked the wrong ones?

It turns out my son was well-prepared for the step up. But when it came to course selection, he did make mistakes—thanks to me. When he floated the idea of giving up orchestra, for example, I was surprised. I encouraged him to stick with it. However, I'd failed to see that my son had fallen out of love with playing the bass. If he'd taken alternative electives, he might have discovered other interests, if only I'd butted out.

The truth is, it can be hard to know when to steer kids and when to step back.

Give Them Some Space

It may not be immediately obvious, but kids this age have already started demonstrating more independence. "Typically, by fifth grade, children are orienting more attention to their peer group and prioritizing where their interests lie," says Michelle Harris, director of Hawken Middle School in Lyndhurst, Ohio, who also has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. "Now is an important time to let kids flex a little independent muscle. Ask open-ended questions about what appeals to them, and say, 'Tell me more about that.'"

By allowing a child to work through the process, Harris notes, you're giving them lifelong skills to make good decisions.

Even when you feel strongly about a subject or activity, a little parental flexibility can go a long way. "Let's say the arts are highly valued in your family," says Harris. You can encourage your student to take advantage of those offerings. "However, the more agency a student has within that framework—giving them a choice like piano or flute, or ballet or jazz—the closer you'll be to your ultimate goal of setting your student up for success." Learning to navigate their own path is part of that process.

Naturally, all parents want to help their kids be well-positioned for a bright future, but parents shouldn't fear their student taking risks, especially in middle school. "It's important to let a child choose a class where they can go each day and truly cultivate an interest of their own," says Jenmarie Eadie, a licensed clinical social worker and child and family therapist in Upland, California. "And you never know—that one class might lead to a lifelong passion."

Step Back—But Not Too Far

During the middle school years, parents will find that teens can seem very self-sufficient one day, and completely needy the next. "At this age, there is a dance between kids being independent and wanting to still be connected with you," says Eadie. "Be available for cuddles and time together as they're adjusting."

This back-and-forth is a normal part of adolescent development, says Harris. "Growth is jagged. Middle schoolers may be very accelerated academically, but a couple of years behind in their social development," she says. "We can't hyperfocus on one area, or it creates pressure on students that isn't useful. We have to give students opportunities to grow all their different aspects."

Today, the bass is so far in the rearview mirror, I can't believe I ever stressed about my son giving it up. When he decided to drop ice hockey after middle school, I was smarter this time; I listened, and let it go. Now when he's on the trails running cross-country on a beautiful sunny day, I know he has what I wish for him most: happiness. ■

Please, No More Sermons!

When I first learned that I could customize the names of my contacts in my smartphone, I liked the novelty. My daughters apparently did, too.

Because I never password-protected my phone, they quickly discovered that they could set up their own contact profiles in my phone. I thought that was actually pretty cute.

I never thought about the fact that they might have given me a nickname in *their* phones—and then I discovered that my contact name in my youngest daughter's phone is The Priest.

What? We aren't religious. And I don't wear long, flowing robes. What gives?

"Because every time I ask you a simple yes or no question, you can't answer yes or no," my daughter explains. "You give me an entire sermon every time, Mom."

Really?

Okay, I own it. Maybe it's because I know that, as teenagers, my kids are just beginning to understand that there are nuances in life. That things aren't black and white—that shades of gray are often where the most interesting and the most frightening things lie.

Like when she asks me whether I'd let her get a tattoo. She knows I have one that I hate, so I can't just say "yes" or "no." I think it's more important to open up a conversation about why she would want one, what she imagines it might look like, and whether she's thought about what happens if she hates it in a few years. So I try to offer lots of scenarios in an attempt to hook her into a dialogue where she's learning how to make choices for herself one day.

But I have to remember that she's watching me as much as she's hearing me, and that she will learn by doing, not by sitting still and listening to a sermon. She needs to experience life on her own, and it's my job to offer her just enough to encourage her, but not so much that I stifle her.

Kari is a writer and a social-emotional educator at theselfproject.com. She likes nothing more than a houseful of hungry teenagers pretending to do homework together. Fortunately, she also loves to cook.

For as long as I can remember, deciding whether to ask my mom a question begins with wondering how absolutely necessary it is to hear the answer—and how much time I have—because she's incapable of just answering yes or no.

My mom doesn't see life as black and white. She doesn't see anything as black and white, which means that every time she answers a question, we cover a lot of ground.

For example, if I ask whether she will let me get my nose pierced, she starts off by saying, "Well, my initial reaction is..." and then launches into an explanation of her first reaction. That leads to more reactions and more explanations, all narrated point by point. Then, if I'm lucky, she will finally give me her real answer—before wrapping it up with some additional thoughts she has and why they don't figure into her final answer.

I need to pay attention the whole time just to get to the answer that is buried in there somewhere. It's exhausting.

It took me a while to figure out that it was absolutely necessary to preface every time-sensitive question with, "Just give me yes or no." Because of her tendency to generously explain, I awarded her the contact name "The Priest" in my phone (which causes a lot of confusion and strange looks whenever anyone else sees it).

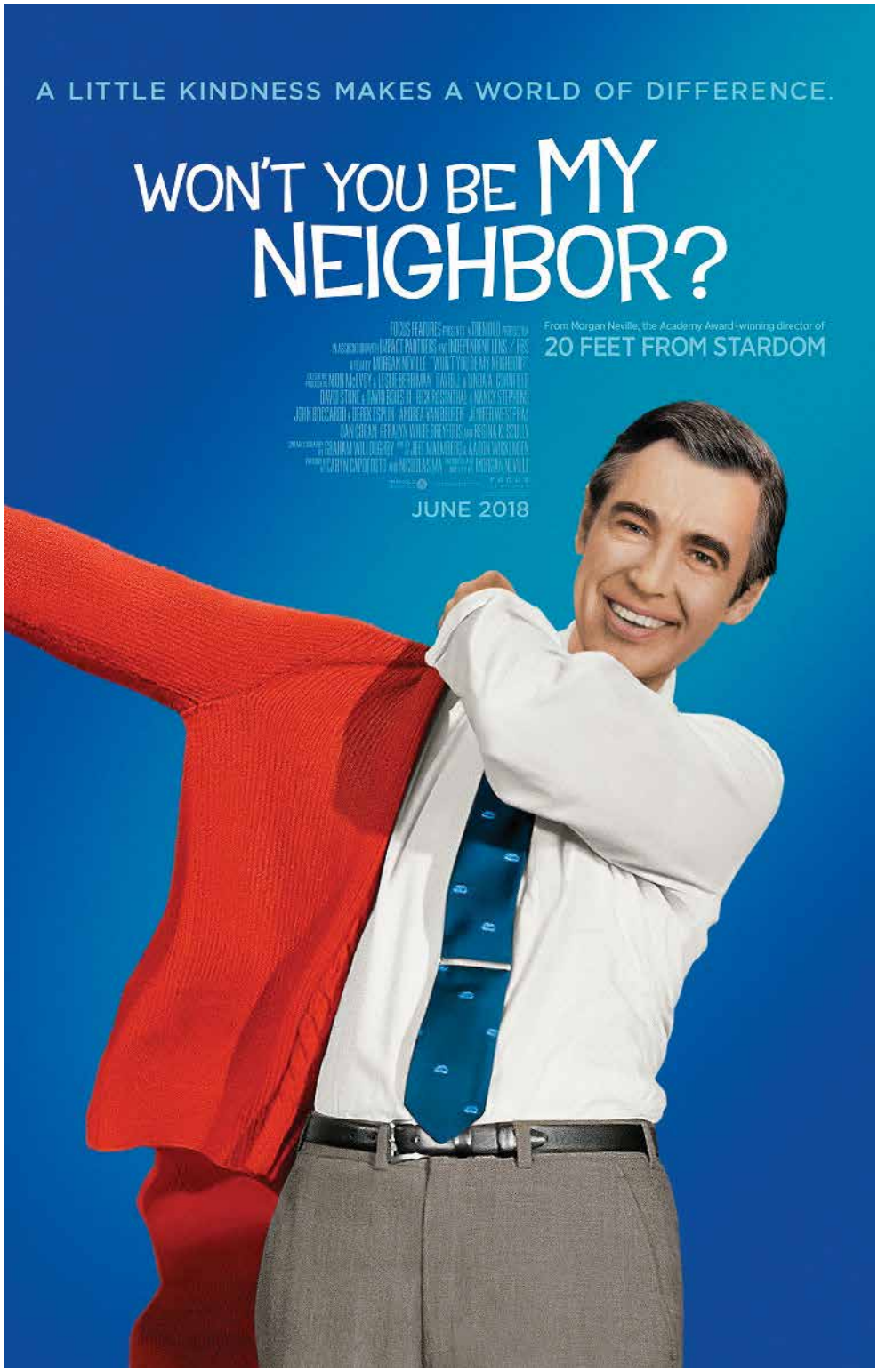
I know she means well, but she does this with everything. I better not be in a rush if I ask a question that can't be answered with a simple yes or no.

Lauren is finishing her sophomore year in high school and prefers to spend her time playing guitar, writing songs, and watching The Office. She lives with her older sister, mom, two dogs, and a geriatric cat in the Pacific Northwest.

I want to begin by naming and celebrating the ways you are both learning: Lauren, I love that you've developed a strategy for expressing your need for simple answers. Kari, you are owning the ways that you want to support your daughter while recognizing her need to discover in her own way. I hope you can both give yourself credit for the ways you are growing!

When communication gets frustrating, though, parents and teens can benefit from creating systems that address *both* of their needs, such as:

- Agree on a weekly chat time—perhaps during a shared activity or over tea or coffee.
- Develop a code word to request a break if conversation gets too long or heavy.
- Try to use clear communication about needs, for example: "I'd like to share something, and I don't want advice. I just need to vent."
- Before giving advice or suggestions, ask for permission with a phrase like, "Are you open to an idea?"
- Pause before responding to one another, giving each other a chance to speak mindfully.



Be patient with yourself and one another as you each keep growing toward deeper connection.

And also, Kari and Lauren, keep exploring that sense of humor you clearly share!

As a certified Positive Discipline Parent Educator, Courtney Harris guides parents and supports tweens, teens, and young adults in finding their voice, growing in confidence, and thriving. Find her at courtneyharriscoaching.com.

Want to share your story? Email your idea to editor@yourteenmag.com.

Photos by **Beth Segal**

Raising Risk-Takers

Even smart kids do foolish things. Help your teen make wise choices and take positive risks.

By **Gail O'Connor**

Mark was away for work when his wife messaged him. They'd gotten a call from their daughter's high school with the news that she had sneaked alcohol into the building in her school bag to drink with friends.

Mark and his wife expected their daughter, a freshman, to tell them there must be some mistake. However, to their surprise, she confessed. "We learned in that moment that as lovely, beautiful, and kind as our child is, she was capable of bad behavior," says Mark.

What makes teens—even "good kids"—do things that are risky and likely to land them in trouble? For one thing, they're built that way.

"Adolescents take chances because their brains are wired to take risks," explains Jess P. Shatkin, M.D., author of *Born to Be Wild: Why Teens Take Risks and How We Can Keep Them Safe*. "But it takes about 10 more years for the brain's prefrontal cortex, which helps with impulse control, to develop and make decisions about what's safe and what's not."

That's many parenting years spent lying awake at night worrying: Most young adults don't reach full brain maturity until about age 25, research shows.

However, not all risk-taking is inherently bad. Teens can get a rush of the feel-good brain chemical dopamine from taking positive chances, too—like wanting to take the harder honors class, working up the courage to perform in the school talent show, or taking advantage of an opportunity to travel to another part of the world.

And teens who embrace risks may reap another benefit: They're faster learners, according to research published in *The Journal of Research on Adolescence*. "Teens have an internal struggle of still being a kid and wanting to explore their independence," says Alison S. Tothy, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Chicago Medicine. "You probably see this several times over the course

of a day. One minute they're saying, 'Leave me alone. I've got it;' then all of a sudden they're turning to you saying, 'Help!'"

There is, of course, also peer pressure, and the desire to fit in and be liked—which make the very real risks of drug and alcohol abuse so worrisome. "As parents, it's hard for us because we've spent the past 12 to 14 years being sort of the center of their universe, and developmentally we no longer are—their peers are becoming that center," says Dr. Tothy. And those kids have a lot of influence on your teenager's decision making right now.

Here are some guidelines to keeping your teen safe:

Help them branch out

Maybe you're not crazy about their squad at school. On some level, they may not be, either—but it can be intimidating for a teen to break social ranks at school. "Ask yourself what other ways your teenager can meet kids outside their usual social circle," says Dr. Tothy. Think beyond standing up and moving to another lunch table—that can be really hard for a tween or teen to do, says Dr. Tothy.

Instead, look outside school. Is there a writing program in your city, a youth group at your place of worship, or a social justice cause your teen is passionate about where they can find like-minded peers? "Some kids take a lot of initiative, but some still need to be scheduled by their parents," says Dr. Tothy. "It's okay to help them find those social avenues."

Surround them with positive adults

You can't pick your kid's friends, but you can influence who the adults in their world are. "Surround your child with people who have the ability to be a positive influence in their lives," says Dr. Tothy. That may be an extended-family member, a coach, or a leader in your community whom they can volunteer or intern with. "It's about making sure that village is there supporting your teen," says Dr. Tothy. "There will be other adults having the same conversations with them about good decision-making, just in different voices and ways."

Role play scenarios

At some point, your teen is going to be in a situation where they're offered alcohol, drugs, or a vaping device. Go over the different ways they can respond. "Talk through specific scenarios: 'You're going to a party, and there may be alcohol, and you're not 21. What are you going to say or do so you can stand strong and don't feel ostracized?'" says Dr. Tothy. Come up with scripts together, from a firm *"No thanks"* to *"I'm taking medicine and can't drink."*

Walk through what your teen can do in an emergency. Make a pact that they can call you no

10 HEALTHY RISKS TO TRY THIS SUMMER

1. Order something different at your favorite restaurant.
2. Train for a race.
3. Try a new sport.
4. Read a book—maybe a classic that seems intimidating, or a work of nonfiction on an intriguing topic you know little about.
5. Pick an "adulting" skill to work on, like making your own doctor appointments or learning to do laundry.
6. Sing karaoke.
7. Dance when people are watching.
8. Stop in at a store to fill out a job application for a summer job.
9. Set a reach goal for the next school year, and make a plan to meet it.
10. Apologize to someone you've hurt.

matter the time of night, no questions asked, rather than getting behind the wheel or into a car with someone who's been drinking. In the 2016 Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the Centers for Disease Control, teens were much less likely to binge drink if their parents monitored them and showed warmth and support in doing so.

Save awkward conversations for no-exit spaces

The car can be a great place to have conversations—say, a talk about condoms—that may be necessary but might otherwise bring your teen death by embarrassment. "You get to say, *'I'm not going to look at you, you're not going to look at me, but we're going to talk about something important, and you get to roll your eyes all you want since I'm driving and can't see you.'*" says Dr. Tothy. Stay the course through their protests, she says—they'll still hear your message.

Stand firm when they mess up

"There has to be some autonomy and trust, but when a kid does something that takes away that trust, they have to earn it back," says pediatrician Cora Collette Breuner of Seattle Children's Hospital. It can be difficult to enforce consequences, she says—when you ground your teen, you're pretty much grounding yourself too, since you will most likely need to be home to supervise them.

It also takes strength, she adds, to address phone privileges: If you want your teen to put their phone away at 9 p.m. (or whatever the cutoff is in your home), then ideally you'll put your phone away, too.

Don't hold on to resentment

The teen years are rough, and it can be difficult to keep your cool. "It's really hard when your kid loves you one day and hates you the next, but you've got to learn not to take that part personally," says Dr. Tothy, especially if you want to have an open dialogue with your teen. If you want to remain approachable to your child, you'll need to find the strength to let go of the grudge.

Praise them for what they're doing well

You don't have to be heavy-handed about it, says Dr. Tothy. (They will give you side-eye if you try to compliment them for simple things like using a seatbelt.) But don't be shy about encouraging healthy efforts at independence, like taking a school trip, even if you're secretly worried they're going to lose their passport. Says Dr. Breuner: "It can be easy to focus on what they seem to be doing wrong, but noticing and complimenting good decision-making can help reinforce smart behavior."

I'm Afraid to Take Risks—But I'm Doing It Anyway

Risk. The very word makes me shiver. I have always aspired to become a risk taker—to go skydiving, cliff diving, backpacking, and so much more. I envision myself standing atop a mountain, gazing out at the valley below, being overcome by a sense of freedom.

Then my eyes open. The daydream is over, and I return to the reality where my definition of risk is trying a new flavor of ice cream. The truth is that I don't usually take risks. In fact, right now, writing this essay is my risk.

When I first thought of writing this essay, I was timid. I was afraid of all of the "what-ifs" that raced through my mind like wild horses. *What if I don't get published? What if my essay isn't good enough? What if I'm not good enough?*

The idea of placing my love of writing into someone's hands, open and vulnerable to their critique and criticism, made my heart pound. As much as I wanted to take the risk, I was afraid. Afraid that something I love—writing—would be tainted by the stain of rejection.

For days, the thought of this opportunity plagued my mind. I had no lack of wanting to try, but that desire seemed to be imprisoned by the fear of rejection.

After having the idea gnaw on my brain cells for a few days, I finally brought it up to my mom. To be 100 percent truthful, her response is what motivated me to take the risk. The second I explained the essay to her, her reply was, "Go for it! You can do it!"

My mom, ever since I was young, cultivated my imagination and encouraged me when I took an interest in writing. She has never stopped having my back and has pushed me to take non-reckless risks and chances. She has never stopped believing in me and has been my cheerleader every step of the way.

My mom and dad's encouragement and faith in me spoke volumes. It showed me that I was loved and accepted, even if I don't get published. It has shown me that I shouldn't be afraid of rejection—because I'm already accepted by the ones who matter the most.

Hannah Hatfield, a recent high school graduate, enjoys writing, photography, music, and reading. She has been writing since she was 8 years old.

The Glory of Risking—and Failing

I stared up the mountain. There was no way. The soles of my feet stung, my calf muscles shuddered, and now a lump swelled in my throat.

What had I been thinking? Why had I ever set foot on the ascending trail of a 14,000-foot-high Rocky Mountain? Yes, I had trained a bit. But daily walks and occasional runs had only carried my body past the tree line. Above me, row upon row of switchback still stretched up.

I slumped down onto a rock. I had attempted to summit a 14er. I had taken a risk. And I had failed.

Or had I?

I shifted my gaze from the remainder of the rising trail before me to the expanse of sky behind.

Had I truly failed? Or had the experience of taking a risk been worth my falling short of the summit? Maybe it wasn't the end achievement that mattered so much as the understanding I could now carry into life's next risk. And perhaps there was a reason my parents hadn't scoffed at the idea of climbing a mountain, but had hiked with my siblings and me.

This wasn't the first time Dad and Mom had eagerly jumped in to share the joys, struggles, and risks of my passion. Instead of pointing out my ineptness, they are quick to support and encourage me. Even when I doubt myself, allowing touches of perfectionism to hinder my success, my parents understand the significance of taking a risk and graciously prod me forward.

I don't climb mountains every day. But, like other teenagers, I face all sorts of risks and opportunities to go beyond my comfort zone on a daily basis. Should I strike up a conversation with that kid or not? Should I shoot for an A+ or simply allow B's to get me through? Should I accept a challenge or stick with what's comfortable, familiar, and easy?

Life is bursting with insecurities that we all—at some point—will have to face. Why not step out while we're young? Parents, why not stretch us as teenagers in ways that will prepare us for tomorrow by giving us firsthand experience today?

The word risk shouldn't scare us. It should excite us. When I return to Colorado again someday, I will have studied, hiked, run, and trained like I didn't before. And who knows? Maybe my boots will scrape the summit.

Bethany J. Melton is a 17-year-old writer, blogger, and aspiring journalist with a passion for words, books, music, strong coffee, and the outdoors. She lives with her family in Missouri. Find her at bethanyjsjournal.wordpress.com.

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Let's Talk About Sexting

What parents and teens need to know

By **Amy Paturel**

Joselyn Jackson*, a 14-year-old in California, says that at least once a month, she receives an image of one of her classmates' penises—and that nearly everyone she knows has sent sexually explicit messages. A few states away in Denver, 17-year-old Evan Massey* says that for some of his friends, collecting nudes from teenage girls is almost like a hobby.

These acts of "sexting," the electronic sharing of sexual innuendo or intimate images or videos, can happen with or without prior consent. Sexting usually occurs between people through private message or text, but it can also happen between groups of people on social networks such as Instagram and Snapchat.

While Joselyn and Evan are still in the minority, sexting is becoming more common among kids under 18. A study from the University of Calgary in Canada shows that among 11- to 17-year-olds, one in seven have sent sext messages, and about one in four have received them. While many sexts do stay private, as intended by the teens who send them, the seemingly simple act of sexting is still fraught with complicated consequences.

Is Sexting Always Bad?

The prevalence of sexting may be a natural outgrowth of the way adolescents explore sex and relationships in the digital age.

"There's little divide between the online and offline lives of today's youth," says Sheri Madigan, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology at the University of Calgary. "So not surprisingly, their romantic lives now also take place on their devices."

Sexting isn't inherently wrong—

"The sender has no control over where that image goes, who sees it, or what they do with it."

when both parties are consenting adults. For some couples, it increases feelings of intimacy, as love letters may have in decades past.

"Part of intimacy is shared disclosure and vulnerability," explains Justin Garcia, M.S., Ph.D., associate professor of Gender Studies and research director of the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University. In fact, normalizing sexting, and sexuality in general, can have a huge payoff for both parents and teens.

However, while each state's laws are different, most have severe penalties to protect minors from exploitation. So, if your kid is under 18 and they create, send, or receive sexually explicit images of another minor, it could be considered child pornography. That means that even if both parties are minors, kids who sext could be charged with a misdemeanor, felony charges, prison time, and mandatory sex-offender registration that could affect them for the rest of their lives.

Sexting Is Risky

Even short of understanding legal consequences, teens may not realize the potential long-term effects of hitting "send."

It's important to emphasize to kids that even when they are of age, once they send a sext, that picture, text, or video is out of their control—forever. The sender has no control over where that image goes, who sees it, or what they do with it.

"A lot of girls have body insecurities," explains Jackson. "Sending a nude photo to a guy makes them feel good about themselves. It makes them feel wanted." Unfortunately, the initial high when a guy "oohs and ahhs" plummets to dramatic lows when images are shared, leaked, or discovered by their parents or school administrators.

Take this real-world example: A 12-year-old boy from California solicited naked pictures from a 12-year-old girl, saying he would give her $20 if she sent him the requested images. The girl sent the pictures, the boy shared them with his friends, and dozens of classmates wound up seeing them. The girl has since been dubbed "20 Bucks."

Trouble is, kids are impulsive by nature. They may realize sexting isn't the smartest decision, but the short-term dopamine hit of getting affirmation—or the conundrum of how to say "no" to someone they like—can be more powerful than the potential risk of a leaked image. So, it's critical to outline the real-world consequences of sexting for your kids.

"Not only could they face bullying, depression, and anxiety—if they share the image, or it's found, they could land in jail," says Garcia.

"I try to tell my friends, you'll feel powerful until you hit send," says Jackson. "Once it's out of your hands, you'll be powerless." ■

**Names have been changed.*

ICEBREAKERS

Parents can't necessarily stop their kids from sexting, but they can ...

- Use recent headlines and news stories to talk about sexting with kids.
- For younger kids, explain that text messages, emails, and online communication should never include images of anyone without clothes.
- For older kids, ask, "Have you heard of sexting? Tell me what you think it is." Once you learn what they know, you can better shape the conversation.
- Emphasize that it is never okay to ask or pressure anyone to sext, nor is it okay to send unsolicited sexts.
- Discuss peer pressure in the digital age, and provide strategies for how to say no. Then, provide them with tools to turn down a sexting request, such as using humor or simply saying, "Let's keep it offline. I'd never want anyone to see this stuff on my phone or yours."
- Discuss what to do if they receive a sext. (Delete!—unless it's from an adult, in which case it should be reported to law enforcement.)
- Go through "what if" scenarios: *What if you feel pressured to sext? What if you send a sext and then regret it? Then what happens? What if you break up with your boyfriend/girlfriend—what happens to those pictures?* "This helps youth think through hypothetical scenarios with their parents," says Madigan. "In the event they encounter this scenario in real life, they will have some problem-solving strategies to draw on."

I Didn't Want to Exist

Helping a Suicidal Teen

TEEN

By **Stacy Brief**

It's hard for people to imagine. Hard for people to understand. Hard for people to accept. When someone hurts themselves or looks to end their own life, it scares people. But it is hard for that suicidal person to understand, too—and it scares them just as much.

A suicide attempt is rarely a spontaneous decision. It took years of feeling as though I did not belong or fit in. I was harshly judging myself, and I felt socially ostracized and bullied. I developed severe feelings of shame and hatred toward myself before the suicidal ideation began.

I desperately wanted to be accepted by a group of people who were constantly pushing me out and reminding me I was not good enough. The constant agonizing emotional pain that I was feeling—and that I did not know how to articulate and express—spiraled into wanting to die.

There were times when I had an elaborate plan. I knew how, where, and when I was going to go through with taking my life. At times like these, I was at the most danger to myself. I was the most desperate and needed the most intervention.

Sometimes, it was more of an abstract wish not to exist—wanting to disappear and not face the pain or struggles I had been facing every day. When feeling like this, I did not necessarily wish that I was dead. But wanting to disappear still posed a threat and left me on a path where I would want to take my life.

And at other times—less severe times—my suicidal ideation came through in reckless behaviors. Feeling suicidal can be as simple as crossing the street without looking, reckless driving, or drug use. I remember walking across a main road at a green light, not caring what happened to me.

As I started to feel more suicidal, I began to make cries for help. I was self-harming; I isolated from those who cared about me; I slept irregularly; and I made small comments that often went unnoticed about "not being here" for the future. These were signals I was sending that I was hurting and that I couldn't handle life anymore.

At the same time, these signals were hard for others to notice because I did my best not to let others see what was going on internally. I maintained a 4.0 GPA, played sports, and smiled. People had an idea of what a suicidal teen looked like, and I did not fit that mold.

Now, being at a point in my life where I can look back with insight and reflection, I can tell my parents how to help me moving forward, and I can tell other parents how to help their own children.

One thing that I think my mother would have wanted to know was that we don't always need to talk. Feeling suicidal can be extremely difficult to articulate, and I was always fearful of upsetting her if she knew what I was really feeling or thinking.

Sometimes, I didn't even know what I was feeling. Physically sitting together—just being present and not talking—was usually what I needed most.

My parents often told me how special and amazing I was. They couldn't help themselves; they wanted me to know it, and I could see how much it pained them to see that I didn't. I remember how frustrated and upset I felt when they would tell me because I genuinely did not see it and could not believe it.

But what did help was when they told me that I would someday be able to see what they saw. That acknowledged that I thought otherwise, but gave me hope that I, too, would be able to see it one day.

I wish my parents had known when I was feeling my worst that it was not a reflection on how much they loved me or on their parenting, but instead on how much (or little) I valued myself. It was not anyone's fault.

One of the hardest things for my parents was wondering if they could have stopped me. My suicidal ideation was a downward spiral, and I made small attempts to end my life. The farther down I spiraled, the less it seemed that intervention was possible. But my social worker was able to intervene and stop me from truly attempting to end my life.

When I was at my darkest point, I avoided becoming attached to people or passionate about anything because I did

not want to miss anything or upset anyone if I chose to leave this world. Now I know that these connections are the most important things for me to have. I call them anchors.

Anchors are things or people that I care about deeply. I think about these anchors to remind me why I am alive. My family is an anchor. My dogs are anchors. So are my friends and my therapists. I have passions that are anchors too, such as American Sign Language, suicide prevention, and raising self-esteem among adolescents.

I am on a constant journey towards achieving self-love. Although I am not at the point where I can confidently say that I love and accept myself, I know that I have value in this world, and that is enough for me to want to live. Through the hard work I put into my therapy, I am able to determine when I am feeling like I want to give up, compared to when I am feeling like I am a danger to myself, and that allows me to reach out for the help I need.

Stacy Brief is now 20 and studying social work at Adelphi University. She is dedicated to helping others and working to prevent suicide.

PARENT

By **Lisa Brief**

Confident, caring, sweet, motivated. Those words were used to describe Stacy by anyone who knew her. But nobody knew what was behind the sweet smile. She didn't let anyone see the lack of confidence, the pain, or the loneliness. She had friends, was great in school, played sports, had interests, and spent time with family.

Around the age of 13, we began to see signs that something was off. She didn't go out with friends as often. If she did, she'd call to come home early. She retreated to her room and spent a lot of time alone and sad. Her legs shook uncontrollably. More concerning signs were seeing Stacy glued to social media (which had never been her thing) to see what other kids were doing that she wasn't.

All of a sudden, she was "cold" all the time. She was wearing long sleeves and covering up more than usual and more than necessary to hide the hash marks of her self-harm. She frequently had "headaches," an excuse to stay home from school or cancel plans. Then we noticed her lack of interest in food. She pushed the food around her plate. She thought if she got skinny, she would fit in better.

Through it all, the hardest part was that she would not open up to us. We later learned that she felt she didn't fit in anywhere, not with friends, not even with her family. That was tough to hear and heartbreaking to think she felt she didn't belong with us—her family who loves her fiercely.

I received a phone call at work from the high school social worker halfway through her freshman year. Stacy gave her a razor blade and confided in her that she was afraid she'd hurt herself and that she had a suicide plan. That night, we had to leave her scared, alone, and crying, in a pediatric psychiatric hospital. That was the most heart-wrenching night of my life. We knew she had to be in a safe environment. We spent the night wondering when and where we had gone so wrong.

Not much changed at first. She still didn't want to talk to us much, but at least she spoke regularly and willingly to the social worker and began a medication regimen to help fight depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. She tried to go to school but couldn't make it through more than two or three periods without having an anxiety attack and fearing she'd hurt herself.

We couldn't continue to put her through that, so we researched options for her. Stacy started by attending a "partial" program; she spent part of her day doing school work and part attending therapy and group sessions. After being homeschooled for the remainder of her school year, we were lucky enough to find a small, therapeutic high school. The school offered academics, therapy, and a safe environment. We advocated for her needs, she began to speak up for what she wanted in her schooling, and we tailored a program to fit what Stacy needed to feel comfortable.

We also learned that, although kids deserve privacy, sometimes it is necessary and okay to violate that privacy for their own safety. We knew we needed to monitor her social media, messages, and texts. We saw she was communicating with girls we'd never heard of. They were girls in similar situations, but they were giving her new ways and ideas of how to harm herself. Because of that, we learned what things could not be left around the house and what further monitoring was necessary.

Slowly, Stacy began to spend more time with family again. We'd play games, watch movies, and go for walks or out for ice cream. We kept her occupied. She developed some new hobbies—painting, baking, and sign language. She learned that keeping busy was her best defense against her own dark thoughts and urges.

It's true that it takes a village to raise a child. Stacy was very fortunate to find an amazing group of people to be part of her village. We are so grateful for the group of social workers at both schools and the group of teachers who became her friends, confidantes, and part of our family. Those bonds are now forever.

The high school administration team was amazing, too. They were happy to spend time talking with us, encouraging Stacy, listening to her needs, and helping any way they could. They showed concern and support for not only Stacy but for the whole family. Stacy also had a family friend that she often turned to, and we had friends who supported us and encouraged us to keep doing what we were doing to help her.

We are most grateful for every day that Stacy is still with us, and that she

feels she has purpose in life. She has become an advocate for mental health and has taken on suicide prevention as her purpose and her message. We couldn't be happier for her or prouder of her. We are thankful we get more time to love her.

Lisa Brief is a loving, hardworking mother of three children who works to support the prevention of suicide.

EXPERT

By **Stephen Sroka**

Suicide is a serious risk for teens. According to the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 17% of 9th through 12th grade students seriously considered suicide, 15% made a plan in the past year, and 9% attempted suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents aged 15-19 years.

Based on my experiences with suicide research and prevention, I can offer other families the following advice:

Reassure them that they—and you—are not alone. The three words *you're not alone* give parents and teenagers faced with a paralyzing suicide situation hope, energy, resilience, and a foundation to move forward. *You're not alone* is the first answer to the cries for help.

Know that suicide is complicated. Suicidal people do not fit molds. Consider:

- *It is more than just the stress of tough times.* Most teens, even those living stressful lives, do not become suicidal. But for some dealing with mental health issues or traumatic experiences, suicidal behaviors may surface.
- *Mental illness often plays a role.* Suicide can be a preventable loss—if a teen dies by suicide, it is possibly the result of untreated or undertreated mental illness, such as major depressive disorders, bipolar disorder, and substance abuse problems.
- *Contributing factors can vary.* Bullying may be a contributing factor, but there is not enough evidence to say that it alone can be the cause. A family history of suicidal behavior may be a risk factor, as may child abuse, neglect, and trauma. Access to a weapon, alcohol, or drugs, especially in the home, are risk factors.
- *Denial is a hurdle to healing.* Cries for help are often subtle and overlooked. Many parents say, "My teen will never be suicidal," but denial is common in parents of suicidal teens.

Know the signs. How do you know if your teen is at risk, or just being a normal teen with puzzling behaviors?

- *If you suspect, inspect.* Look at their rooms, social media, and friends.
- *Ask about the severity of suicidal ideation.* Talking about suicide will not make someone complete a suicide. If a teen has specific plans and strong intent, those are huge warning signs. Get help as soon as possible.
- *If in doubt, get help.* Do not try to assess the risk yourself. It is the job of a licensed health professional to assess the risk level. Medically assisted treatment may be prescribed, as well as physical movement and counseling (walk and talk therapy).
- *It is better to err on the side of caution than to suffer the potentially grave consequences.* Suicide cannot always be accurately predicted. Love alone won't fix it. Professional interventions can help.

Recovery is possible. Offer the teen hope and support to move on, and let them know things will get better.

After a suicidal situation, help is available from school-based mental health professionals such as school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and nurses. Community clinics may offer mental health counseling and emergency psychiatric screening services. Personalized recovery programs based on individual needs can also help ensure success.

Interventions may be needed multiple times; there is no timeline for needing support.

As Stacy mentioned, anchors—things that have deep meaning, often called protective factors—like family, friends, faith, and even pets can help you from going adrift in the river of risky behaviors. Routines and keeping busy are cornerstones against relapses. Becoming an advocate for suicide prevention, as Stacy has done, can also be healing.

And, of course, it helps to spread that key message to other teens: *You're not alone.*

Stephen Sroka, Ph.D., is an adjunct assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and president of Health Education Consultants. He is an internationally recognized adolescent health consultant.

Crisis suicide lines for free, confidential information and support for yourself or someone you are worried about:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741741

The Trevor Project for LGBTQ+
1-866-488-7386

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Summer Sleep Schedules

Summer can be a great time to catch up on sleep. But too little structure can also be a problem. How can you make sure your teen or tween is getting enough sleep this summer? We spoke with Sarah M. Honaker, Ph.D., director of the Behavioral Sleep Medicine Program at Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, about summer sleep schedules.

When do sleep patterns begin to change for tweens and teens?
Many parents will notice changes in sleep when their child begins to enter puberty. In many mammals, puberty is associated with a normative delay in circadian rhythms—the daily cycle that helps determine what times of day a person feels more tired and more alert.

So teens really do naturally tend to fall asleep and wake up later.
Yes, and this delay in circadian rhythms has been linked to how far along an individual is in puberty—the farther along a child is with other pubertal changes, the greater the delay in sleep cycles.

Should kids have some freedom from schedules in the summer?
Most teens are asked to wake up too early during the school year, so it is nice to allow them to sleep on a more natural schedule over the summer. Typically, teens are tired between 10 and 11 p.m., and wake naturally between 8 and 9 a.m.

There is, of course, some natural individual variability. Scientists have identified chronotype genes that influence a person's natural inclination regarding the times of day when they prefer to sleep or when they are most alert or energetic. For example, if one parent is a night owl, it isn't surprising to see a child who also likes to stay up late.

Should parents expect kids to take ownership of getting enough sleep?
Kids vary in their ability to make good choices around their sleep and other areas of health. In the U.S., most high school children are not getting enough sleep. Sleep deprivation also tends to get worse as kids become older adolescents. If you look at juniors and seniors in high school, they operate on chronic sleep deficiencies.

Some of this sleep deprivation is explained by the fact that parents, by this age, are less involved in monitoring their sleep. It is certainly fine to try this if a parent feels their child can do a good job managing their own sleep schedule. Be prepared, however, to step in if you see signs that your child still needs your help. (See sidebar.)

How can parents make sure teens are getting enough sleep?
Teens need 8-10 hours of sleep each night. The more rules there are around bedtime and enforcing good sleep habits, the more sleep kids get. These limits can include rules about the use of electronics at least an hour before bed, not using a phone or other screens after bedtime, having a set bedtime and waketime, and limiting caffeine consumption. Studies suggest that the more autonomy kids have about sleep, the less sleep they tend to get.

But why does it matter what time of day teens get their sleep?
Being awake during the day and sleeping at night is associated with better mood and productivity in kids and adults. Kids who sleep during the day and are awake at night are often getting less light exposure, spending less time being active, and having fewer social interactions with family members and others.

Also, light exposure affects your circadian rhythms. A child who wakes at noon is not getting light exposure until that time, resulting in a further delay in natural sleep rhythms. Light exposure and wake time will greatly influence when a teen is ready to fall asleep at night.

Interview by Jane Parent

Tips for Healthy Sleep

- **KIDS AGES 12-14**
Set a summer sleep schedule with a regular bedtime and waketime. Special exceptions for a party or family event are okay, but sticking to bedtime should be the norm.

- **KIDS AGES 15-17**
Offer a little more flexibility—maybe a set waketime, but they set the bedtime. If getting enough sleep becomes a problem, return to a set "lights out" time.

- **A SET WAKETIME IS KEY.**
Most importantly, set a time to wake up in the morning. Wake time sets a person's sleep drive for the day: The longer you are awake, the earlier you are ready for sleep that night.

- **GIVE ELECTRONICS A BEDTIME.**
As a family, agree that both parents' and kids' electronics and screens will be shut down an hour before bedtime and kept out of bedrooms. In doing so, you model that healthy sleep is important for adults, too.

What Teens Learn When Parents Drink

Can you still have that glass of wine with dinner?

By **Whitney Fleming**

My 12-year-old daughter walked into the kitchen and said, "Wow, did you guys have a party last night?"

I looked at her quizzically and responded, "Why would you say that? You were here with us for most of the time."

"But look at all the bottles," she said as she poured her cereal.

I glanced over to my sink, where I saw four wine bottles lined up, ready for recycling. The truth was that my neighbors had come over for pizza and brought a few bottles of open wine left over from a party they had the prior weekend. No one had more than a glass or two, but I couldn't help wondering what message my daughter received from seeing the empty bottles.

Drinking Responsibly

"Parental behavior is one of the strongest predictors of a child's perception of alcohol," says Lisa Leshaw, M.S., a clinical mental health counselor. "Parents are role models and how they behave with and around alcohol sends a message to their children."

That doesn't mean moms and dads need to conceal or discontinue their occasional wine or beer, says Leshaw. "However, they should display responsible behavior."

What responsible drinking looks like, though, is subjective. Some parents believe it is an occasional cocktail before dinner, while others think it's handing over the keys to the car because you are inebriated.

"Responsible drinking means that you never have to feel sorry for what happened while you were drinking," says Keith Klostermann, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the clinical mental health counseling and marriage and family therapy programs at Medaille College. "It's not only how much or often you drink, but also the choices you make, such as abstaining when ill or taking medications, or being the designated driver." Teens watch these decisions as well.

Many parents try to normalize alcohol use by allowing their teens to drink at home with parental supervision. The hope is that this will lead to more responsible behavior, but research suggests otherwise, says Klostermann. A recent Australian study published in The Lancet

Public Health found that teens whose parents provided them with alcohol—usually with family for a special occasion—were more likely to binge drink during the six-year study. Allowing your son or daughter to drink alcohol at home makes alcohol seem less risky, says Klostermann.

On the flip side, never taking a sip of alcohol in front of your kids or avoiding it altogether may not prevent your teen from drinking, either. Even in that case, Leshaw explains, "kids will still experience a tug of war between your values and their peers."

How to Talk about Alcohol

Even if a parent is not a drinker or waits until the child is not around to consume, teens are exposed to alcohol at every turn—in movies, television shows, and video games, at sporting events and parties, and even at Target or Whole Foods cafes. Our alcohol-saturated environment normalizes drinking without addressing the risks.

Ongoing two-way communication regarding alcohol—with both teens and parents fully participating in the conversation—appears to be the most effective tool in preventing abuse. As part of this continuing conversation, there are messages that parents can share to help teens put their parents' drinking in a healthy context.

Binge drinking isn't cool. Parents should be wary of glamorizing their past experiences with alcohol from their youth, which may normalize the behavior.

Think about why you drink. Parents should be aware of how they convey their motivation for consuming alcohol. Teens should not hear (or observe) that drinking is a way to alleviate stress or cope with sadness.

Drinking is not a joke. Adults should refrain from casual jests that make light of alcohol use, such as referring to downtime as "wine o'clock" or to getting drunk as "partying." "Although glib comments about drinking seem harmless, they may convey an unintended message of using alcohol as a coping strategy," says Klostermann.

Alcohol is not an activity. Parents should convey to teens through their own words and actions that alcohol is an adjunct to gatherings and activities, and never the primary focus. ■

Photo: Beth Segal

Sneaky Snackers

When tweens eat (and eat) between meals

By **Mary Helen Berg**

Once upon a time, you may have managed your child's snack choices, rationed treats, and doled out healthy nibbles after school. Now, it may seem that the only way to track your tween's snack habit is by following the trail of crumbs, empty bags, and wrappers. You may not see them snack, but you find evidence everywhere—even under their pillows.

Most tweens and teens need one or two snacks daily to meet nutritional needs, according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, but when your tween appears to sneak snacks behind your back, it can feel deceitful or unhealthy. Your instinct may be to try to curb the behavior, but experts say surreptitious snacking is actually your tween's effort to assert independence, and attempts to restrict and control snacks will only make the forbidden fruit more appealing.

"The tween years are the years when kids start to affirm their own authority; they want more control of the world around them," says Jennifer Powell-Lunder, a clinical psychologist who writes the "Let's Talk Tween" blog for *Psychology Today*.

"At that age, there's not a lot you can control. You do control what you eat," Powell-Lunder tells parents.

Should You Stop the Sneaking?

Tweens who sneak food may actually snag snacks as a way to test household rules—and parental resolve—by eating them whenever and wherever they want, Powell-Lunder says. So, if your house rules mandate that food must be kept in the kitchen to avoid an ant invasion, explain this to your tween and make sure to enforce the rule.

But if you limit between-meal snacks because you fear your tween will spoil their dinner appetite, you may need to rethink your expectations.

After all, tweens and teens are growing more than they have since toddlerhood, and they actually are hungrier during these years, explains Powell-Lunder. Consuming extra calories with between-meal snacking becomes a nutritional necessity.

"They eat like there's no tomorrow," she says. "They're like bottomless pits."

The key is to keep lots of healthy snack options on hand. Since tweens long for empowerment and will be more likely to eat something if they pick it out themselves, you should consult your tween about which healthy snacks to buy.

"Your instinct may be to try to curb the behavior, but experts say surreptitious snacking is actually your tween's effort to assert independence."

Should You Worry?

While you want to give your tween some autonomy with their snack choices, be aware that hoarding or hiding food can indicate an eating disorder or emotional issues, cautions Powell-Lunder.

"There's a big difference between a kid who sneaks a couple of cookies and a kid who eats three boxes," Powell-Lunder explains. "When a kid who's having social issues at school comes home and eats a lot of food, it becomes obvious that this is a kid who is eating their feelings."

If you're familiar with your tween's eating habits, it will be easier to assess whether extra snacking signals a growth spurt, an effort to test boundaries, or something more serious—such as emotional or social problems.

If it's necessary to change your tween's snacking behavior, be moderate, thoughtful, and strategic, suggests Brandi Rollins, who conducts biobehavioral health research at Pennsylvania State University.

When parents restrict goodies, it increases a child's appetite for the taboo foods, according to Rollins's research. If parents provide guidance on nutritious eating and allow some snacks, rather than prohibiting them completely, tweens are more likely to learn to how to regulate their snacking and embrace healthy eating habits, Rollins says.

"Restriction simply doesn't work, and it really doesn't work when your child has ready access to these foods outside of the home," she says. "Even though you may be strict in the house, your tween can go out, and they can eat really whatever they want." ■

Tips to Promote Healthy Snacking

Our experts offer the following advice to keep your tween on a healthy snack track.

1 Plan snack purchases with your tween—take them grocery shopping, and read the ingredients on packages before you buy them.

2 Cook together when possible.

3 Let your tween pack their own lunch, with your guidance.

4 Model good snack habits. When your tween sees you eat a treat, they'll want it, too.

5 Don't have food in the house that you don't want your tween to eat.

6 Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of various food choices. For example, sugar intake can influence mood, while protein provides endurance.

7 Create a snack cabinet full of healthy options that your tween can access any time they're hungry.

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Get a Job!

Helping your teen develop a resume, cover letter, and interview skills.

By **Linda Wolff**

Whether your high schooler is looking for a summer job or uploading a resume to their college application—yes, that's a thing!—it's a good idea to have a polished resume ready to go.

But when Dylan Troesken needed a resume to apply for work at her local fro-yo shop, she was stumped. She didn't know what to put in the "experience" section since she had never held a job.

Her wise grandmother, Janie Emaus, told her, "You've done many things that fall under the category of experience, even if it wasn't a paying job." Says Emaus, "I reminded her about her huge commitment to dance competition and community service experience, for example."

Building a Resume

Keisha Taylor, assistant director of the career center at Bowling Green State University, often gets the deer-in-headlights look from students who have no idea how to assemble a resume. Most of them, like Dylan, think they have nothing to include.

"When I meet with students I ask them to walk me through their day," says Taylor. "If they babysit after school, I ask: 'How many times a week? What are the responsibilities? Are you driving them to the park, preparing meals, or creating activities for them?'"

"Then we come up with buzzwords to help make their resume stronger." For example, they might use words like "leadership" and "time management" to describe a regular babysitting commitment, or "civic engagement" and "initiative" when discussing a volunteer commitment.

Taylor warns of several common mistakes, such as using formatted resume templates that don't fit the position. Another big one: submitting a resume or cover letter that is filled with grammatical errors and misplaced punctuation. Using a good proofreader is essential, advises Taylor. A clean, professional font is important, too. (Arial or Times New Roman, yes—Comic Sans, no.)

Cover Letter 101

If a cover letter is requested, your teenager should create a separate document to email along with the resume. "Students need to understand that a cover letter is both a writing sample and their opportunity to sell themselves for this particular job," says Laura Hosid, an admissions counselor at Vinik Educational Placement Services, Inc. "It should not be a repeat of their resume."

They should tailor their letter to the job opening and explain why they are a good fit for this particular position, and not just why it's an amazing opportunity for them, says Hosid. "Anyone can say, 'I'm detail-oriented' or 'I'm a team player.' Prove it with a specific example."

Put Social Media Skills to Work

Teens may also want to consider creating a profile on LinkedIn, the most popular professional networking platform in the world. More and more, college applicants are using this buttoned-up cousin of Facebook to help them to stand out to admissions officers.

"Because LinkedIn allows for recommendations and endorsements, it's like your resume on steroids," explains Taylor. "When kids first arrive on campus, we encourage them to create a LinkedIn profile if they haven't already. If possible, they should have a professional headshot taken—no selfies! We teach them how to create a strong, positive online identity."

Nail the Interview

Is your teen dreading an interview? Help lessen the fear factor by having them do their homework first. Research the company, create a list of intelligent questions to ask, and prepare several key points to make about themselves. Hosid recommends they practice saying these key points out loud, delivered with a smile.

And don't forget the thank you note. "We recommend that a student send a thank you email within the first 12 hours after an interview," says Taylor. "A handwritten thank you card is a nice touch and can be sent within a day or two after the email."

"It never hurts to send a thank you note for an opportunity even if you don't receive an offer. Always leave on a positive note." ■

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Top 5 Tips for Saving for College with a 529 Plan

It's never too late to start saving for college.

By **Diana Simeon**

Whether your family has started saving for college or not, you may already be aware that 529 plans offer some serious tax benefits. But did you know that families can use these plans to pay for more than just tuition? Or that others can contribute to your child's plan? Here are the top five tips experts want you to know about 529 plans.

Tip # 1: Just Do It.

"Families should know that saving for college is always worth it," says Tim Gorrell, executive director of the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority, which manages Ohio's CollegeAdvantage 529 plan.

And there's no such thing as too late. "The earlier the better, but there are advantages to saving at any time," he stresses. That's because whatever you're able to save before college reduces the amount your student has to borrow and pay back (with interest) after graduation.

Tip # 2: Know the Tax Breaks.

529 plans offer a couple of terrific tax benefits. First, money invested in these plans grows tax-free, and withdrawals from 529 plans are also tax-free when used to pay for qualifying expenses (see Tip #3). Second, if you invest in your own state's 529 plan, you may also get a deduction on your state income tax. For example, Ohio residents may deduct up to $4,000 in contributions to the state's CollegeAdvantage plan per beneficiary, per year.

"This is what distinguishes 529s from other savings that people have," says Gorrell. "If you invest in a regular mutual fund or savings account, or even a CD, you will pay a tax on your gains when you withdraw your funds. Plus, you won't be able to deduct any contributions on your Ohio tax return from those kinds of accounts."

Tip # 3: Be Flexible.

Families can use money saved in 529 plans to pay for tuition, room and board, fees, books, supplies, and even computers and specialized equipment required by a student's degree program—a stethoscope for nursing school, for example. And they're not just for expenses at four-year colleges. 529 funds can be used for almost any kind of post-secondary education: community college, certificate programs, trade school, and graduate school. Basically, you can use your 529 plan anywhere your student can use federal financial aid.

529 plans are flexible in another way, too. "If your child doesn't go to school or gets a scholarship, the beneficiary can easily be changed," explains Jeffrey Feinstein with Lenox Advisors. So, if one of your children gets a scholarship and no longer needs all the funds in their plan, you can simply transfer the money to another child—or even to yourself for your own education.

Tip #4: Do Your Homework.

Picking a 529 is a lot like picking the investments for your retirement plan. You'll want to look for plans with low fees, a solid performance record, and top ratings.

"Start with your home state's plan," recommends Kathryn Flynn of SavingforCollege.com, which aggregates information on every 529 plan. "More than 30 states offer a tax credit or deduction for 529 contributions." Just be sure to carefully evaluate the track record of your state's fund; years of poor performance can undo any tax benefits your state's fund provides.

That homework should also include figuring out how much you can—and should—save each month. What are your student's goals? A private college? Public? How much financial aid might they receive? "Sites like SavingforCollege.com offer calculators to help you set a savings goal," notes Gorrell.

Tip # 5: Check for Ease of Use.

Be sure to pick a 529 that makes it easy to contribute. A great way to bolster your child's college savings is to ask family members to contribute to the fund for holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions. Sure, the latest gizmo or gadget may be more exciting, but an education truly is a gift to last a lifetime.

Ohio's CollegeAdvantage plan, for example, has a gifting tool where, with a simple code, families can make a contribution with just a few easy steps. Says Gorrell, "My brother gave me his code so that for my nephew's birthday—or for Christmas—I can use it to make a contribution."

The bottom line? Don't wait! "We have $1.4 trillion in student loan debt in our country, and the average loan is $37,000 per student," says Gorrell. "Anything a family can do now to lower borrowing for college can help." ■

Does Your Teen Need Direction?

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Learning What Makes Them Tick

Guiding your teen along the path of self-discovery

By **Nancy O'Connor**

Ballerinas and firefighters come up a lot when you ask kindergarteners, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" But by middle school, the responses are much more varied. YouTube personality and professional gamer might make the short list now, along with engineer, doctor, or lawyer.

Adolescence is a time when natural abilities emerge and special interests take shape. As teens start to learn what makes them tick, this can be an ideal time to do a little investigating about where their interests might take them. It might even help you answer the age-old question: "When am I ever going to use algebra, anyway?"

Here are four great ways you can help your teen along their journey of self-discovery:

1. Check the Wiring

"We are all wired to be good at certain things, to solve problems in certain ways," says Dr. Denise Reading, CEO of GetWorkerFIT, a company that helps students with career path and job skill development. Reading firmly believes, "The earlier you know this information about yourself, the better."

Reading recommends teens complete a comprehensive assessment of their aptitude, personality type, values, and interests, like the one her organization offers online. "An assessment can reveal so many choices, so many fields that you and your child may never have known existed," she says—many of which did not even exist a few years ago.

Some occupations will demand a college degree, while others may require a certification program. Though teens may not be ready to choose a path just yet, Reading says, "they will find it empowering to discover they have skills that are of value to the world."

2. Fill in the Blank

Dr. Robin Chaddock, a life coach and author of *Discovering Your Divine Assignment*, supports the idea of self-assessment for teens. As a way to start the conversation, she suggests asking your teen to complete this sentence: *If the world had more _____, it would be a better place*. Their answer can reveal what she calls their Central Passion. "Even at a young age, people can identify if they are more inclined toward justice or wisdom or generosity," says Chaddock. "Then, parents and other adults can help them identify their skills, interests, and talents to bring that Central Passion alive."

3. Connect the Dots

It's impossible to know what all of the future career options will be for our teens. But it can be tantalizing to know that there are real-world applications for their interests. Reading advises parents to pay attention to what intrigues their teen, and what problems they like to solve.

Is your kid fascinated with drones? "Unmanned flight is becoming huge, not only in the military, but across many industries," says Reading. Maybe they enjoy lab sciences at school? "In some markets, there is a high demand for histotechnologists, who work with human, animal, or plant specimens to diagnose disease and abnormalities." And the teen who is mastering the art of Instagram could someday find a use for those skills as a social media manager.

4. Support, but Don't Steer

Be wary of guiding your teen to a specific college or career path based on what you envision for them. Your most important role, Chaddock says, "is to let your teen know they are unconditionally loved and valued for who they are, and not what they produce. What they choose as a college major or career path is just that—a path. People grow, mature, and explore new options as they move through life."

Putting the time in now to discover what comes naturally to your teen and what interests them can make future life decisions easier. "High school can feel long and purposeless to a teen," says Reading. "But once they understand why they are taking algebra and what they can do with it, they tend to become more engaged in learning. They can see a pathway into their future." ■

Screen Time vs. the Family Vacation

Mom and Dad want to check email. The kids want to Snapchat. Now what?

By Jen Jones Donatelli

Two decades ago, the packing list for a typical family vacation included items like sunscreen, bathing suits, and binoculars. Today's packing list has expanded to also include items like iPads and smartphones.

No doubt, electronic devices have their place in family travel—offering everything from picture taking, to on-the-road entertainment, to keeping in touch with the outside world. But what's the secret to keeping the family togetherness in family vacations?

For many parents, setting clear boundaries is the key. For instance, when British mom Grainne Kelly travels with her two teenage sons, using devices at family meals is strictly off-limits, but she does permit "designated down time" for plugging in.

"Even on vacations, people need some alone time to work on self-care and process their day," says Kelly. "Giving kids time to catch up with friends and social media will feel less like you are trying to cut them off from the 'real world.' Furthermore, it will be a less traumatic experience when you need them to unplug."

Mom blogger Maria Lianos-Carbone says that allowing her kids to use their devices on an overseas flight greatly helped cut down on bickering. But when they landed, she asked her 13-year-old son to leave his phone in airplane mode for the duration of the trip. This approach had two benefits: Her son could still make use of the camera to take photos, but he didn't use up any expensive data.

Parent Screen Time

Sometimes, parents need to be plugged in for work even when they're on vacation. That can complicate things. "Since my livelihood is freelancing and social media, I do have to check emails several times a day," says Lianos-Carbone, who also needs to post daily on Instagram and Facebook. Lianos-Carbone tries to keep the emails to a minimum by setting up an out-of-office reply and only responding to time-sensitive emails and potential new clients.

Whatever rules you set for family travel, formalize them before the trip with a family meeting where everyone helps co-design a "Family Tech Agreement," says Nicole Dreiske, executive director of the Chicago-based International Children's Media Center and author of *The Upside of Digital Devices*.

And if your job may occasionally preclude you from honoring the agreement, Dreiske recommends being upfront.

"If you have deadlines to meet while traveling, opt for transparency," suggests Dreiske. Say something like, "'This trip is important to me, and being here with you guys is the most important. At the same time, I've got to get this proposal or article or report finished, so I'll be working some nights.'" It's a courtesy to give them a heads-up.

It's How You Use It

While electronic connectedness can certainly interfere with family connectedness, the use of devices does have some benefits—staving off boredom during transit, for instance, or helping with on-the-go research and documentation of memorable moments.

Kelly recommends making a shared Instagram account devoted exclusively to the trip, where all family members can login and share posts.

"This fun activity connects family members and friends, and gets social media urges out of everyone's systems," says Kelly. "At the end of each day, or better yet—after the vacation is over—go through all the pictures on the account. You may be surprised by the different perspectives."

If you can't reach a satisfying "family tech agreement" that keeps everyone's noses out of their phones and iPads, consider traveling to a no-phone-zone. (Weekend in the Adirondacks, anyone?) It doesn't necessarily have to be a remote destination in a far-off country. When Lianos-Carbone takes her sons to visit their grandparents in Florida, the house has no television or Wi-Fi, so nights are spent renting movies or just chilling out together.

In the end, it's all about finding the equation that works best for your brood. ■

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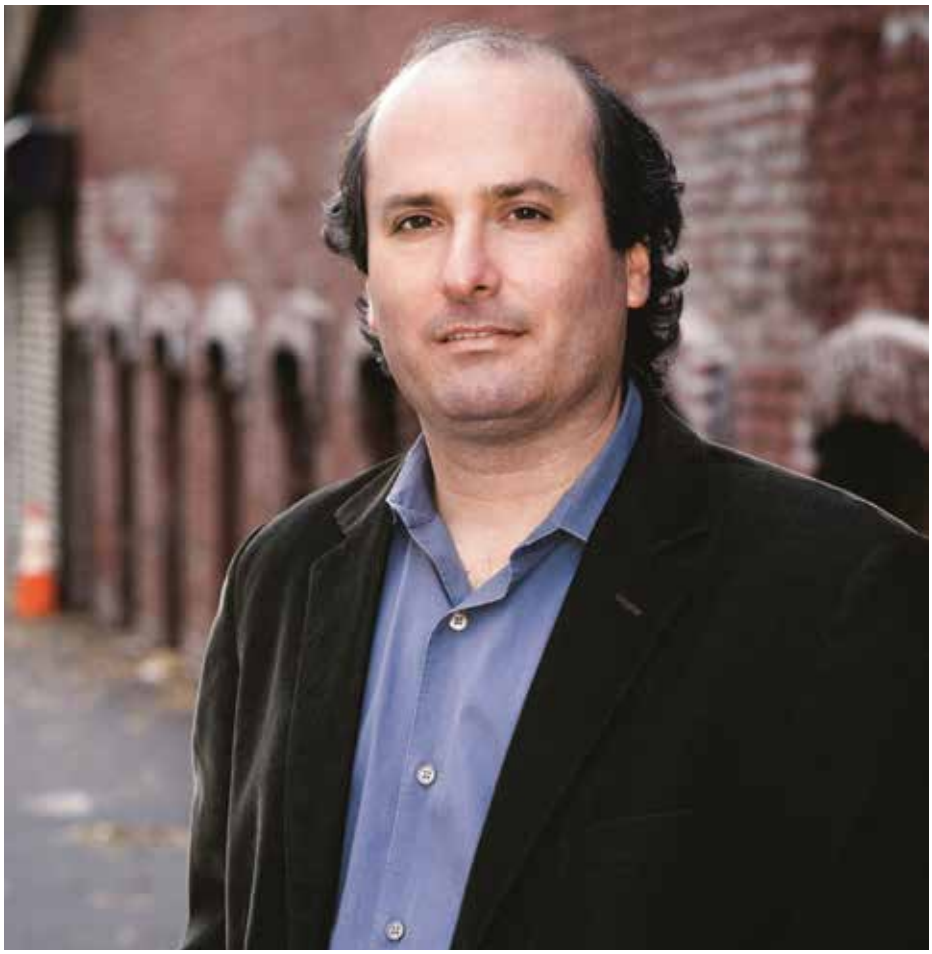


David Grann, a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, is known for his bestselling nonfiction works of adventure and intrigue, including *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. We got the scoop on a different kind of adventure: Grann's life parenting his kids, Zach, 14, and Ella, 11.

As a parent of a tween and a fairly early teen, what is the most interesting issue you are dealing with right now?

Like most parents raising kids today, one of the challenges is dealing with social media and devices and trying to separate our kids from them so they do other things. My kids are pretty good about it, but that's one challenge that didn't exist when I was growing up.

It is easy to focus on the challenges, but so far I find these ages to be kind of wonderful. They are independent, and they have their own curiosities and obsessions and interests. You can talk to them about fairly sophisticated subject matters such as politics. I find that incredibly refreshing.

Your mom [Phyllis Grann] was a high-profile publisher. Now that you have your own kids and a busy career, what do you take away from how she balanced work and parenting?

It's interesting. My mom was a working mom at a time when it was a little less common, at least in the community where I lived and grew up. She would commute into the city, and it was a long commute. And she would race to be home for dinner. Only when I was older did I realize she probably did three hours of commute time with a full-time high-pressure job.

You don't appreciate it when you are young. Then you have children and you think, *How did she do that?* My wife is in some ways similar. She is very successful. She runs a documentary production company. She commutes into the city and somehow manages to do all these things. Now that I am older I can really appreciate the challenge of that.

And how have you been able to balance your own busy schedule with parenting?

I used to go into the office, and now I work from home. That has really been a blessing because I obviously work a lot and don't have regular hours. I work late or odd hours and travel a lot, so being at home allows me to have time with my kids. I have these wonderful moments when they come home from school and I hear about their day and how they are doing with their homework.

Do they come to you for help with their homework? Do they ask you to proofread their essays?

Certainly, with writing they do. At this age, I really just try to be encouraging. I think at this age editorial guidance is less important that encouragement.

They do come to me for math help, too, and I am totally helpless. They have already surpassed me in algebra and geometry. I tell them to ask their mom because I can't count past a hundred.

Are there books that you think are important that your children read and that all American children read?

My general thought is to read widely and to incorporate a love for reading. I say that because children's tastes will change, and they will find different books that relate to them. But learning to love to read, I think, is the most important thing because it gives you a skill you can take anywhere.

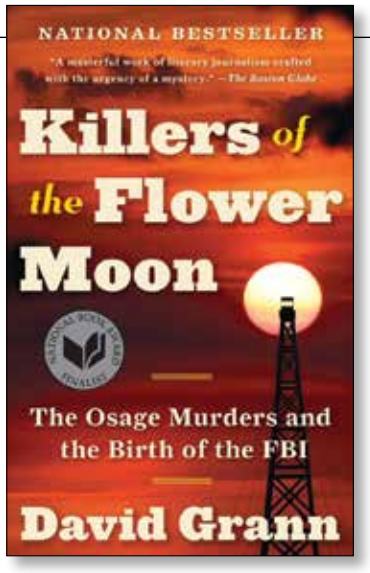
When I was younger, I wasn't a voracious reader. The process began for me when I discovered *The Outsiders* and other S.E. Hinton novels. They were just incredibly gripping, and they were the first books where I found myself hiding in my room with the light off—when my parents closed the door, I would keep reading. Sort of my first act of rebellion. Then I went on to all these other books, like *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

My mom actually stressed this, and I thought it was smart: She said to just read—you don't need to necessarily be reading Dickens at age 10.

So you're not too concerned with the content they're reading?

Yeah, read what you like. I don't think it matters so much. If a child loves graphic novels or comic books, whatever it is that is turning them on to read and turning on their imagination. I know a lot of people have kids who aren't big readers but they love baseball. So get them young biographies of Jackie Robinson. There are all sorts of entry points into literature.

But then I think it is very important as they get older to read subject matter that will open their eyes to realms and people. Sometimes people are going through things they understand, and sometimes people are going through



things they really can't fathom because they are growing up halfway around the world in a war-torn area or battling racism. So, I think both fiction and non-fiction are really important. They teach you the power to begin to perceive the world through the lives of others. ■

Interview by Beth Segal

Squeaky Wheel Kids

How to stand firm when they won't let something drop

By Kim O'Connell

Can I watch "Jurassic World?"

Why can't I watch "Jurassic World?"

Everyone I know has watched "Jurassic World!"

Come on, Mom. I can handle it. Let me watch "Jurassic World!"

I felt like a dinosaur myself, but I kept saying no. At 11, my tween son was still under the recommended viewing age for "Jurassic World," a PG-13 movie. I've seen all the films in the Jurassic Park franchise, and while they have a fair amount of campiness, they are still scary and violent. People get eaten by gigantic, flesh-tearing creatures, after all. It took several more tries before he finally let it go, but he wasn't happy about it, and neither was I.

Many parents have experienced some version of this squeaky-wheel syndrome. The kids want something, you say no, and they don't let it drop. Maybe the kids want a cellphone or to sleep over at a friend's house without the parents being home. Maybe they want to stay up late or skip soccer practice or watch an R-rated movie.

Whatever it is, parents who can stand firm through the second or third request often give in by the 5th, 10th, or 25th. But giving in can have serious consequences, both in terms of your relationship with your children and in their interactions with others.

"If you change your mind after a certain number of requests, you're simply training your kids to know where your breaking point is," says Katherine Reynolds Lewis, a journalist and author of *The Good News About Bad Behavior.* "Any limit worth setting is a limit worth upholding. If you say no, you must mean it. You're teaching your child that your word means something."

Letting kids wear you down also sends potentially dangerous signals to kids that others outside the family can be worn down, too—for example, a girl who pesters a friend to drink with her or a boy who pressures a girl to send him sext messages.

"Kids need to learn that it's not okay to beat someone down with requests," says Anne Terwilliger, a counselor in the Arlington, Virginia public school system. "You don't want your son to think that, if he asks 40 times, she'll finally kiss him."

How can parents caught in the squeaky-wheel pattern break the cycle? Lewis suggests empathy and acquiescence, when possible. "You can empathize with your child and still stick to a limit," she says. "You can say, 'I hear that you don't think I'm being fair, and I understand that you must be disappointed.' You can change your tone from defensive or weary or annoyed to empathetic."

Also, whenever possible, according to Lewis, say yes. "If your children are being respectful, find ways to occasionally give them what they want within reason," she says.

And it's okay to take your time responding to a request, Terwilliger says. Buying yourself some time to come up with an answer you can stick to is better than saying one thing and then changing your tune later.

"I sometimes tell my kids, 'You're asking me something that I will have to think about,'" Terwilliger says. "You want your kids to question things and be willing to push boundaries in their lives. But at the end of the day it has to be respectful."

Sticking to your limits is a way of showing up for your kids. "Kids want that strong parent," Lewis says. "Even when they're railing at you, they realize that they're being protected."

Recently, my son brought up seeing "Jurassic World" again. There were no whiny follow-ups, just a single polite and reasonable request. This time, we watched the movie trailer together, and we had a calm conversation about its content. I told him if he truly felt he was ready to watch it, he could.

So far, he hasn't watched it—and I haven't heard another word about it. ■

"LEGAL" DOES NOT MEAN "SAFE"

***Nearly 1 in 5 teens** report abusing prescription medications to get high.*

Parents: Take the following steps

- Lock your medicine cabinet or keep medicines that could be abused in a less accessible place.
- Avoid stockpiling medication.
- Keep track of how much is in each bottle in your medicine cabinet.
- Monitor your child's Internet usage. Watch for suspicious websites and emails that seem to promote the abuse of prescription medicines.

Talk to your kids!

Only 31 percent of teens, report that they "learn a lot about the risk of drugs" from their parents.

However, studies show that parents could possibly cut the likelihood of their teens using drugs in half just by talking to them.

SAY Social Advocates for Youth — A Program of Bellefaire JCB

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

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End of the Road

By Suzan L. Jackson

When we took our toddler and preschool-age sons on a two-week-long road trip, our friends thought we were crazy. We planned that first road trip from our home in Delaware to visit grandparents in Oklahoma, with fun stops planned along the way. We were unsure how this would work—especially when, an hour into the trip, our toddler yelled from the backseat, "All done!"

It turned out that we had a wonderful time, and our annual road trip tradition was born.

Most summers, we spent three weeks traveling cross-country, towing our pop-up camper. We planned days-long or even hour-long stops along the way—so getting there really was part of the fun.

Our road trips became epic adventures that we looked forward to all year. We visited national parks, discovered amazing state parks, and explored everything from museums to zoos to city sights. Our sons loved doing so many cool things: We dug for diamonds in Arkansas, saw mind-blowingly huge dinosaur tracks in New Mexico, stayed in a treehouse in Oregon, and slid down giant sand dunes on sleds in Colorado.

Even the long hours in the car became part of our family story. In between stops, time melted away with audiobooks, games, and special music CDs (and, later, playlists) that I made for our trip, with themes like Rivers or Tennessee or Silly Songs.

We cherished those long road trips, and we were so proud of our intrepid travelers.

Then, the unthinkable happened. On our way home from a 10-day trip to Vermont and New Hampshire when our sons were 16 and 19, they nervously told us they didn't want to go on "long family vacations" anymore. It was too much time away from their friends, and they were too busy.

"But we were only gone 10 days!" I sputtered in shock.

It was a tough blow to my husband and me, though we did understand where they were coming from. Just fitting in that short trip among summer session at college, work schedules, and soccer practice had been a challenge.

But understanding it intellectually didn't help my husband and me cope emotionally. We were devastated—those road trips were the highlight of our year.

We both loved that giddy feeling of pulling out of the driveway, with our self-contained world packed into our truck and camper, just the four of us together, exploring new and exciting places, living in that little bubble called vacation time, where the real world and all its challenges fade away.

Our sons now come along on a weekend trip or two each summer, and we squeezed in a weeklong vacation to the Florida Keys one Thanksgiving break. At the same time, my husband and I have begun to venture out on our own. There are advantages to that—like more reading time—but two years later, it still feels strange to travel without them. It's very quiet.

Lately, though, the sting of giving up our family road trips has lessened. Our sons have begun to travel with their friends, and they now want to share the places we visited. For spring break this year, our younger son (now 18) was talking to us excitedly about all the cool places he wanted to show his friends: Shenandoah, southern Louisiana, the state parks in Arkansas. "I wish we had a long enough break to drive all the way to South Dakota. They would love the Black Hills!"

We have come full circle. All those years spent driving cross-country and exploring unique places was not for nothing. It seems that while we were having fun, we were also raising adventurous travelers who are now excited to share those great places with others.

I still feel nostalgic for our long family vacations, but now I see that we have set our sons up for a lifetime of exploring the world on their own. And isn't that what this parenting thing is all about? ■

Suzan L. Jackson *is the mother of two boys (ahem, young men) and a freelance writer. Her essays and articles about family, travel, health, and more have appeared in magazines, websites, and anthologies. You can find her on Twitter at @SueBookByBook.*

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The Hard Work of Letting Go

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman

Recently, our middle son graduated from our temple's high school program. It was a lovely service, complete with a video montage of the kids from consecration at age 7 to graduation.

Later that night, I said to my husband, "Remember when Ethan told us he was 'done' after his Bar Mitzvah?"

"Wow—I forgot about that."

It's true. Ethan declared upon becoming a Bar Mitzvah at age 13 that he was officially *done* with his Jewish education. Sure, maybe part of it was to get a rise out of us (taken from Chapter One of the middle child playbook), and maybe part of it was his asserting his independence of becoming a man in the Jewish tradition.

I felt confident, though, that he would change his mind—or I would change it for him. I *am* the parent—don't I get to set all of the rules?

When Ethan said it for the tenth time, and I was tired of arguing with him, I called our rabbi.

"Here's the deal," I told him. "He goes to Jewish overnight camp. He is raised in a Jewish household where we observe Shabbat each week. I am not going to be the enforcer."

I expected blowback from our rabbi—but instead I got, "I get it. Let Ethan come to it on his own." Whoa.

Hmmm, I thought, *he's certainly not "coming to it" on his own*, but I let it lie. I consoled myself with the stats about Jewish camping leading to more observant Jewish adulting.

I don't remember what happened in 8th grade, but I *clearly* remember the first Monday night of ninth grade. Ethan asked for a few dollars for pizza that was being served at Monday school—Monday school is religious school, which we hadn't even talked about.

It was the first Monday of the next approximate 150 Mondays where, of his own volition, he attended religious school. No conversation with us—no pleading from us, no protesting from him.

It got me thinking of *all* the growth our kids go through—and people's comments when I complain about one being lazy, one being *too* motivated, another being risk-averse: "He's got to come to it on his own, in his own time and way."

But can't I just get him there on *my* timeline?

There were (are) so many times when I wish I could take that breath, hold my tongue, not project 10 years into the future that the "lazy" middle schooler will end up jobless and homeless. It's writing a future with hardly any data. But it's what we do as parents—out of hope, but mostly out of fear.

So, in this month of graduations and "lasts," I am going to take that deep breath, let my kids be themselves—as Oscar Wilde said, everyone else is already taken—and appreciate them for who they are today. ■

Stephanie Silverman *is the publisher of* Your Teen.

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