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EDITOR'S LETTER

When my older children were in middle school, I was surprised by the instability of their friendships. Long-standing, reliable friendships became chilly. New friendships seemed tenuous. And as these changes erupted, my reactions were somewhat uncharacteristic of my preferred parenting style. In my head, I was someone who tried to downplay drama. But out of my mouth came, "She said what?" "He did what?" And yes, I did occasionally make disparaging comments about a child (or two).

I wish I knew that my reaction was inflaming the situation, instead I felt justified. My middle school self was invading the grown up me. I was part mother bear and part middle school girl. At the end of the day, I was inadvertently increasing my child's suffering.

I'm still embarrassed to tell these stories. My daughter was walking with a group of girls. At one point, one girl pulled another girl away from the group (not my daughter) and started whispering. One girl handed the other girl a piece of gum while the other girls watched this shift in dynamic. I felt my blood pressure rising. I thought for moment about whether I should intervene, and I came to the wrong conclusion. I asked the girl if she had gum for everyone.

When I came home to boast to my husband, he said, "Way to act like a middle school girl." Ouch.

Then there was the time my daughter had a birthday party at an ice cream parlor. Fifteen girls formed a circle, and two girls started whispering and giggling in that mocking way. I asked the girls if they would like to share their thoughts with everyone.

Apparently, I have a thing with whispering.

Those weren't my only moments, but you get the point.

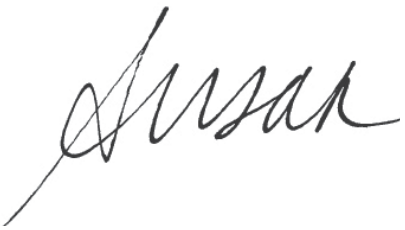
I had the good fortune (lucky for my kids) to hear someone speak about raising resilient children. The speaker presented a compelling case for resilience being more important than academic success. I wondered if every time I intervened I was robbing my children of a chance to become more resilient. I began to make a mental chart of every experience that helped each child build more muscle in the resilience department. I saw each social conflict as an opportunity to learn how to be in a relationship, deal with rejection, and look inward.

And with each day of building them toward adulthood, I grew up too. My reactions became more grown up. "Oh. That sounds awful. I hate when that happens. Are you okay?" And on those occasions when I get it right, I can tell from their reaction that I've had a good parenting moment.

How I wished I'd had Cathie Ericson's terrific feature for this issue, "Popularity: Helping Teenagers Build Healthy Social Lives," which you'll find on page 32. She's got great advice for how parents can help—and not hurt—when it comes to their teenager's friendships.

We've really got a terrific issue for you, including ideas for when teenagers should tattle, how to help teenagers spread kindness online (who couldn't use a bit of that, these days?), and why family game night is about much more than just spending time together. Plus, lots more.

Enjoy the read.



FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

BARBARA GREENBERG

It's always wonderful to have Barbara Greenberg, Ph.D., in our pages. Dr. Greenberg is a clinical psychologist, specializing in the treatment of teenagers, children, and families, and is also the co-author of *Teenage As A Second Language*. This issue, she writes about the many ways grandparents enhance a teenager's life (page 31).

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Arianna Huffington has worn many hats during her career—including as founder of *The Huffington Post*—but with her latest venture, Thrive Global, she's on a mission to help all of us lead more rewarding, less stressful lives. And that includes making sure we get a decent night's sleep. We talk with Huffington about her recent book, *Sleep Revolution*.

GREG ZUCKERMAN

A longtime writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, Greg Zuckerman is also the author of *Rising Above: How 11 Athletes Overcame Challenges in Their Youth to Become Stars*. It's a collection of inspirational stories about today's top athletes. We talked to Zuckerman about what teenagers can learn from sports—and what it's like to co-write a book with your own teenagers.

JENNIFER TRACHTENBERG

We always enjoy talking to Dr. Jennifer Trachtenberg—a pediatrician and assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine—and this issue was no exception. Dr. Trachtenberg, a mother of three, gives us the lowdown on diseases teenagers can catch (and how you can help prevent them). Flip to page 40 to get started.

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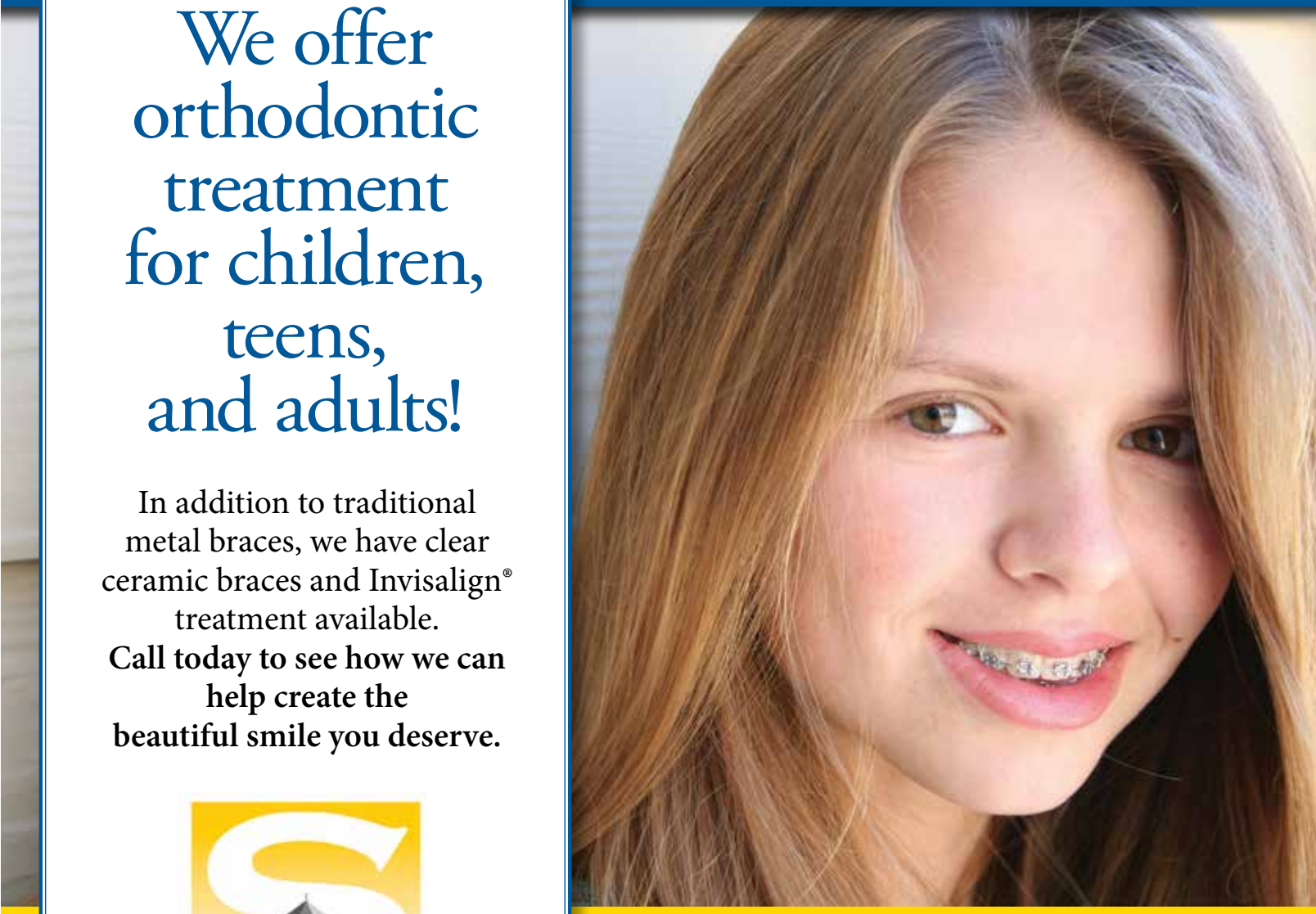

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Professional dancer Karina Smirnoff, popular performer on ABC's "Dancing with the Stars," will lead a public dance workshop on the stage of the State Theatre. No experience necessary. Come learn how to dance like a star!

Outdoor Book Festival

Wednesday, June 7, 10:00 am – 8:00 pm, Euclid Avenue, between East 14th and East 17 Streets

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The Frog Bride

Friday, 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm, June 9 Hanna Theatre (2067 East 14th Street)

When a King sends his three sons to find their brides, two return with fair ladies. The last returns with... A FROG?! This hip musical, performed by David Gonzalez, features an original jazz-funk score and stunning live video projection.

Yvette Nicole Brown

Wednesday, June 7, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, at the State Theatre (1519 Euclid Avenue)

The actress and East Cleveland native, known for her role in *Community*, discusses how the arts serve as a powerful tool for educational growth.

TEDX SALON Dr. Lucianne Walkowicz

Thursday, June 8, 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm at the Westfield Insurance Studio Theatre (1375 Euclid Avenue)

An astronomer at the Adler Planetarium and a noted author and artist, Walkowicz seeks to combine the "right and left brain" to better understand cosmic phenomena.

THE ART OF LEADERSHIP, LESSONS FROM THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY Jon Meacham

Friday, June 9, 10:00 am – 11:30 am, at the Cleveland State University Student Center

Presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize winner Jon Meacham is one of America's most prominent public intellectuals.

We asked parents and teens about...

Household Chores

PARENT ANSWERS

Regular chores don't really work well in our home, so instead I just assign them tasks as needed—they are expected to clean up after themselves, including their own rooms.

Michelle, Raleigh NC

My kids are responsible for doing their own laundry and putting it away. They also have to clear off the dinner table and help rake the leaves. I gave them the task of cleaning out the dishwasher, but there was always an argument over that so it wasn't completed.

Liz, Fairfield, CT

Cleaning the cat box is a punishment—the dishwasher, a fight. My 17-year-old does errands when needed, vacuuming, dishwasher loading and unloading, cat box cleaning. My 15-year-old does the dishwasher loading and unloading, cat box cleaning, vacuuming. No one gets allowance for any of it, they have so much already.

MB, East Norwalk, CT

I stopped doing laundry when clothes were put in the hamper half inside-out, socks rolled up, etc. Whoever cooks dinner doesn't have to do dishes. I also don't change beds. Every-thing gets done, not always when I want it done, but it is done! The only thing that I used to have my kids do that didn't get done was scooping cat litter. The litter box is in my bathroom—out of sight, out of mind I guess. I gave up.

Melissa, Chagrin Falls, OH

Empty dishwasher, walk the dog, make dinner when I work late. But making dinner isn't a chore because my daughter enjoys it and is more creative than we would be.

Mindy, Jericho, NY

My daughter always mopped the kitchen floor when she was in high school. Now that she is in college the floor looks really bad. My son empties the dishwasher, mows our lawn, does any yard jobs, takes out the recycling, shovels numerous times during a storm. Basically he runs our household. Ben holds down the couch. He does the trash.

Suzanne, Scituate, MA

TEEN ANSWERS

I am usually told to set the table and to clean my room. I get out of the first one by claiming I have too much homework and need 10 more minutes to finish it. By then someone else has already set the table. I get out of the second one by just making my bed, or just putting away my laundry, then pretending to think that my parents only want-ed one part of my room clean.

Joanna, Pepper Pike, OH

Typically, I'm asked to either load the dishwasher or fold clothes (second is less often). In my opinion, unload-ing the dishwasher is easier, so, if he's home, I get my brother to load and I unload.

Tara, Jericho, NY

I am asked to make my bed and maintain my room, bathroom, and car. I do not normally ask to get out of chores, however when I forget to do them (which sadly is quite often) I normally just apologize and say I will do them as soon as I can.

Ben, Orange, OH

My sister and I rotate doing the dishes every night after dinner. I usually do them, but if I don't, I might say that I have a lot of homework or a test to study for.

Maddie , Shaker Heights, OH

I usually am asked to clean my room and the bathroom. Usually I get out of them by staying busy with other things like school work and activities.

Hayley, Chardon, OH

#ParentHack

After-Hours Technology? Buh Bye!

For about seven years, our three children were all teenagers—teens who loved their phones so much they even slept with them. We eventually figured this out when each month, we blew through our text and data limits. Allowing for the seven hours they were in school each day, they were clearly making up for lost time by texting and surfing the Web at night. It was hard for them to get up at 6:30 a.m. because their sleep definitely suffered. Have you ever held your kid's phone for them and felt the vibrating barrage of incoming texts—all from other teens who are also not sleeping?

Not only was their sleep interrupted, but ours was too. I would lie awake listening for the sound of furtive texters searching for charge cords, dropped phones, suppressed laughter. We got really tired of reminding, arguing, and threatening.

So we went to Verizon's parental controls. For $4.99 per month per account, we set time controls for each kid. We set texts to turn off at 11:00 p.m. on school nights, 12:00 a.m. on weekends. We set an emergency phone number which they could always reach (our cell phones) but turned off all incoming and outgoing phone calls.

Problem solved. No arguing, no 2:00 a.m. texting. Completely worth $15 per month to us.

This fix doesn't address some of the new problems with apps such as Instagram and Snapchat which have texting features, but parents can solve this with one simple step: require your teens to park their phones at night in a central place like the kitchen. In a show of family solidarity, you can park yours there, too.

As long as they're still in our house, they'll have to play by our rules. And having everyone sleep better is something we can all get behind.

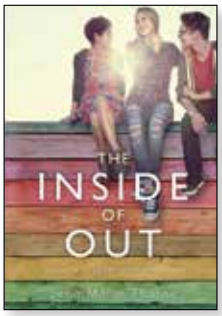
Carrier	Monthly Fee	Reporting	Controls
VERIZON	$4.99 per phone	View wireless usage, installed apps and which apps your teenager uses the most.	Limit phone use during certain times of day. Also offers content filtering to control what kids can access online.
SPRINT	$4.99 per phone	View phone use, including downloaded apps, and when and with whom a teen is talking and texting.	Limit phone use during certain times of day.
AT&T	$4.99 per phone	View online activities, including mail and internet surfing history.	Limit the amount of time allowed on phone. Limit phone use during certain times of day. Block access to specific services such as email, messenger,and chat groups.
T-MOBILE	$5 per phone	None	Limit phone usage to predetermined time periods (i.e. 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Assign allowances for minutes and messages, and set permitted numbers for calling or texting.

YT Book Recommendation

The Inside of Out by Jenn Marie Thorne

This Cinderella-like story is a quick read about a very timely and very important topic. For the young adult crowd growing up in an age where things are changing quite rapidly, this might just be another book about social acceptance. But, for this mother of adult children, it was an eye opening look into the LGBTQIA and Gay/Straight Alliance communities.

Set in Charleston, South Carolina, a bastion of conservatism, accepting differences and change do not appear to come easily. When Daisy Beaumont-Smith, a junior in high school, learns that her best and only friend, Hannah, is gay, she doesn't blink an eye. In fact, she becomes her biggest cheerleader, and therein starts a series of events that this loveable main character finds herself at the very center of. Daisy, who is straight, first has to be accepted by the LGBTQIA club at school. She then finds herself in the role of spokesperson at a school board meeting suggesting that the antiquated ban on same sex dates be lifted for the homecoming dance.



This book explores a host of topics including friendship, first love, social action, acceptance, family, and school hierarchies. What does it mean to be a friend? It touches upon acceptance for both the gay and straight communities and in the end teaches that love is love. Although this book at times is quite predictable and a little too make-believe perfect, I would recommend it. —*Ilene Neides*

By the Numbers

81% of teens agree with the statement "I would choose my life the way it is right now." Only ***17%*** agree with the statement, "I wish I were somebody else.

GALLUP

133 The average IQ of a Physics or Astronomy major, the highest average of all college majors.

STATISTIC BRAIN

15% of eighth-graders report using illicit drugs (either illegal or prescription drugs not under a doctor's orders) in the past 12 months, with marijuana the most commonly used drug and inhalants as the second-most frequently used drugs.

PEW RESEARCH

60% of parents with children under age 18 worry that their child will be bullied.

PEW RESEARCH

1813 The average SAT score in 2015 in Iowa, which ranked first out of all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

STATISTICBRAIN.COM

Products Picks

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

Atomic Beam Flashlight

This compact, lightweight flashlight can fit in your pocket, is 40 times brighter than ordinary flashlights and can be seen from miles away. With five different modes, including high, medium, and low beam, a strobe feature, and an S.O.S. mode. ***bulbhead.com,*** $19.99

Sydney Paige Guidi Laptop Rucksack Back Pack

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Each necklace has an inspirational tree of life pendant with a pearl hanging beside it. The branches of the tree represent a milestone in one's life, such as graduation from high school. The pearl, a symbol of peace, compliments the symbolism of the tree. ***margieedwards.com,*** $61

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As our kids become adolescents, we provide them with freedom—to drive, to manage their schoolwork, to spend time unsupervised. But when it comes to our kids' health and medical care, it seems they're still our babies.

A national poll conducted in 2015 by the University of Michigan's Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit found that many parents of teens are heavily involved in their children's healthcare. Nearly 40 percent of parents said that they alone—not their teens—asked questions about health issues at appointments. Thirty-four percent of parents say their teens do not have any private discussion time with their doctor. And almost two-thirds of parents complete their teens' health history without any involvement from the teen.

Shouldn't we baby them when their health is so important? "Parents should want their child to become an effective healthcare consumer—and that takes practice," says Sarah Clark, lead author of the study. "When parents dominate the healthcare interactions, they impede their children's opportunity to learn to identify and describe their own symptoms, to practice asking questions and clarifying the response, and to understand the basics of the healthcare system."

How to start? Coach your kids to check themselves in for appointments, fill out forms, learn about over-the-counter medications, and talk with the doctor. Then, as older teens, they can manage health insurance info and even schedule and attend their own appointments by themselves. You may have taken them to their first pediatrician visit, but you needn't attend their last. *—Sharon Holbrook*

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Photo: Beth Segal

When Boys Cry in School

The good news: When it comes to ideas about masculinity, we've come a long way. Few adults still believe that it's unacceptable for boys (or men) to cry. The bad news: Like it or not, adolescent boys who cry in front of their peers can still find themselves on the receiving end of teasing, taunts—OMG, you're such a crybaby!—or worse. But many parents still aren't sure how to help their adolescent boy who cries at school or in the presence of peers.

So, how to help? We asked South Florida Psychologist Lori Ben-Ezra Ph.D. for advice. She stresses that for parents, the first step is to find out what feelings are causing the crying.

Here are some common reasons that adolescent boys may cry, along with some tips on how to help.

FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Boys may cry when they lose at sports, struggle academically, or just plain don't get their way. Dr. Ben-Ezra says, "In these instances, it's important for parents to express understanding of the emotion, but suggest more active solutions for dealing with the problem. In most of these situations, crying is just not the best coping strategy. These are opportunities to teach our sons better ways of handling these stressors." Talk to your son about what coping mechanism other than crying may work better for him.

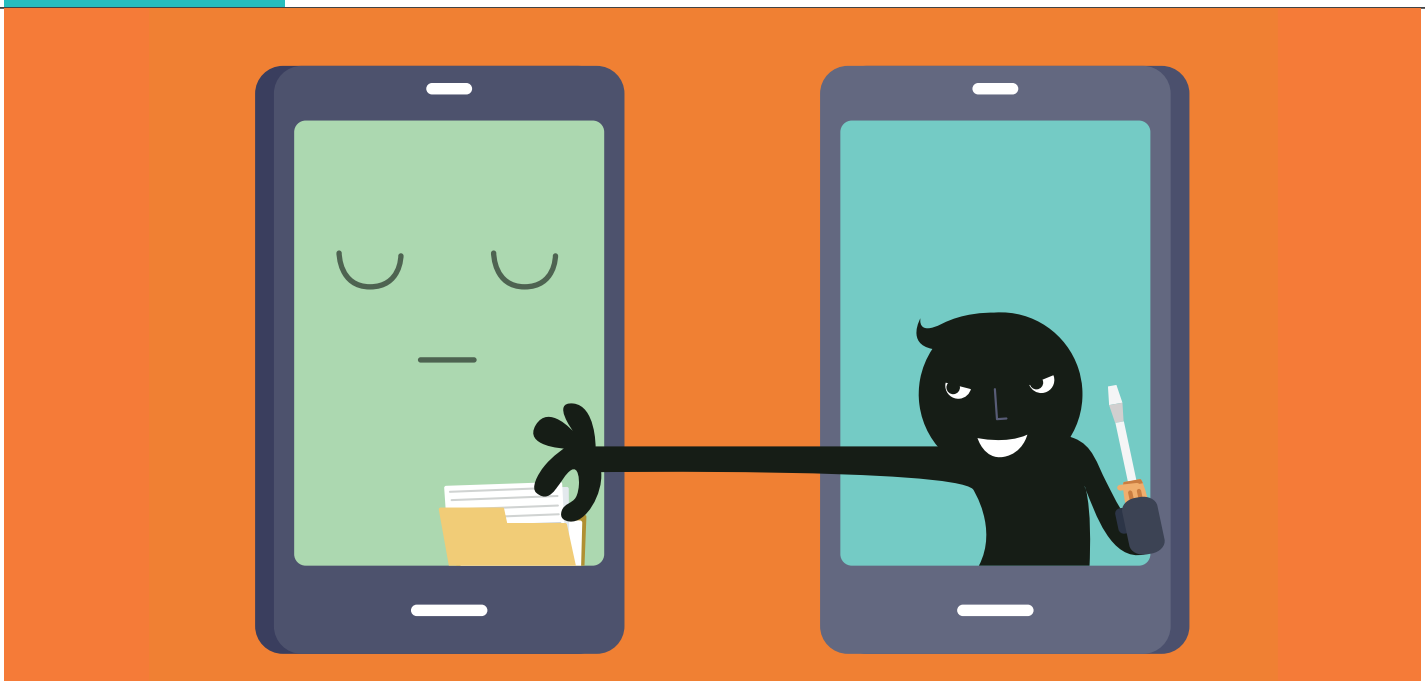
ANXIETY

Boys may cry instead of expressing anxiety. Dr. Ben-Ezra suggests that parents support their sons' feelings of anxiety without judgment. "This will start to facilitate open communication where your son can feel comfortable expressing these issues in the future," she says. "If his anxiety is overwhelming and starts to interfere with social or academic functioning, seeking professional help may be beneficial."

SADNESS/ DEPRESSION

If your son seems sad for extended periods of time or cries frequently, he may be struggling with depression. Be supportive—and also be open to seeking professional help to prevent the problem from becoming more serious, says Dr. Ben-Ezra.

— Laura Richards



Steps to Avoid Identity Theft

Your teenager probably knows not to share passwords with friends (except, perhaps, your family's Netflix password), but is she aware of other important ways to protect her identity and personal data? Make sure your teenager leaves home knowing how to keep the important things secure. Share these tips.

1. Stay safe on public Wi-Fi.

Using a public Wi-Fi network is like having a conversation that anyone can listen to. These networks are typically unencrypted, meaning that anyone sitting nearby with the right software tool can see everything you are doing on the network, whether that's posting to Twitter or checking your credit card statement. If you're on a public network, it's best not to do any activities with personally identifiable information (e.g., information that can compromise you in some way, whether financially or otherwise). Other tips for public Wi-Fi: Use a secure browser, like Chrome or Comodo Dragon; use websites, not apps, as mobile apps tend to be less secure (even banking apps); favor https websites (which are still not secure enough for shopping or banking, but unlike http, encrypt user data).

2. Have a decent password (and more than one).

You probably know that your passwords should not be obvious—and that you shouldn't use the same password each and every time you sign up for something. But does your teenager? Brainstorm with your teenager possible passwords that are both secure and easy to remember.

3.Don't overshare.

Teenagers like to share, but they should know not to share passwords or other personal data, like credit card numbers, social security numbers, pin numbers, etc. This may seem obvious to you, but it may not be to your teenager.

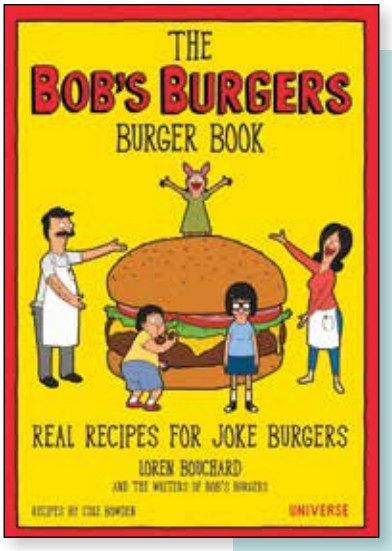
4. Sign up for alerts.

Many banks now send texts and other alerts when it appears that fraudulent activity is taking place. Make sure your teenager signs up for these alerts if she has her own bank or other financial accounts (especially once she gets to college).

The Bob's Burgers Burger Book: Real Recipes for Joke Burgers

If your family is a fan of *Bob's Burgers*, the animated Fox sitcom created by Loren Bouchard, then you already know the Belcher family and their ongoing struggle to run their family burger restaurant. You've also probably noticed the running joke on the chalkboard of the "Burger of the Day." Every day, Bob, the restless creator of new tastes and bad puns, tasks himself with the creation of a new burger special with a silly name. What you might not realize is that the show's writers used a real-life young chef, Cole Bowden, to "conjure up real recipes to legitimize us—and add a dash of respectability to our made-up food."

Bouchard has gathered all these fun, delicious recipes into *The Bob's Burgers Burger Book: Real Recipes for Joke Burgers*. From Season 1, Episode 8: "Art Crawl," here is the Poblano Picasso Burger, an all-beef patty topped with a spicy poblano salsa verde, fresh tomatoes, and Monterey Jack cheese. According to Bouchard, "a Picasso never tasted so good. I mean, we're assuming his paintings tasted terrible. Anyway, this burger is delicious."



POBLANO PICASSO BURGERS

Makes 4 burgers

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb high quality, freshly ground "choice" grade chuck beef

1/4 cup chopped white onions

1 tsp butter

1 large poblano pepper, stemmed, halved lengthwise, and seeded

4 tomatillos, husked and quartered

1 jalapeño pepper

1 lb ground beef

4 slices Monterey Jack cheese

4 buns

1 large tomato, thickly sliced

green leaf lettuce

salt and fresh-ground pepper

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat your broiler.
2. To make salsa verde: Cook the onions in a small frying pan with butter over medium-high heat until translucent.
3. Put the poblano and tomatillos in a small casserole dish and place 6 inches under the broiler for 5 to 10 minutes, until the skins start to brown.
4. Add the cooked onions, broiled poblano and tomatillos, and jalapeno to a food processor or blender, and puree; set aside.
5. Form 4 patties, season both sides with salt and pepper, and cook the burgers as you normally would, making sure to melt a heavy helping of Monterey Jack on top.
6. Build your burger: Bottom bun, cheeseburger, a generous helping of salsa verde, tomato, and the top bun.

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Just Mercy

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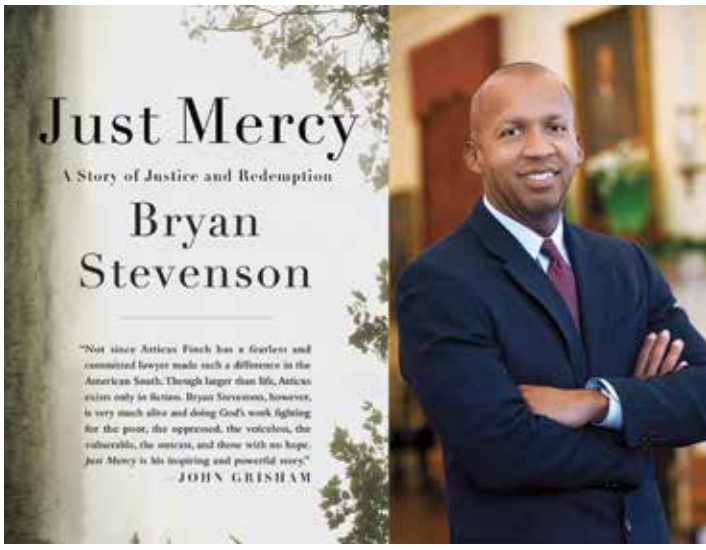


TEACHER REVIEW

By **Jody Brown Podl**

Last summer, my son was notified that *Just Mercy* was the class read for incoming freshmen at his university. He took a copy of the book into his room and didn't leave for hours, explaining that he just couldn't stop reading it. With that endorsement, I got my hands on a copy and found myself immersed in it as well.

The book chronicles the predicament one man finds himself in when he is convicted of a crime he did not commit and ends up on Death Row. Bryan Stevenson, an attorney and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, examines the circumstances that lead to the arrest, trial, sentencing, and incarceration of Walter McMillian, and in doing so, aims to seek justice for Mr. McMillian and to expose the problems that exist in our criminal justice system. Stevenson strategically incorporates information about several other clients in alternating chapters, further revealing a system that seeks to condemn and punish rather than rehabilitate.

Clearly, it's not a feel-good reading experience, but that doesn't mean it's not worthwhile. I spent most of the time clenching my fists and curling up into a ball. And I'm pretty sure that this is exactly how Stevenson wants me to feel—uncomfortable with the status quo. He does so with a straightforward narrative, powerful statistics, and historical context, but his real strength is the way that he humanizes people who are most often demonized.

While there are no easy ways to fix what is broken, Stevenson doesn't let the immensity of the task deter him. The determination and compassion that he demonstrates as he works on behalf of the prison population are so inspiring. Against tremendous odds, Stevenson has made a difference, and that's some hope worth holding on to.

While Stevenson is doing the heavy lifting, there's plenty of work for the rest of us to do as well. First, we need to recognize that there is so much more to a story than what we first see, and that it is our responsibility to look beyond the headlines and soundbites and get closer to the situation. To this end, when we know more; we care more. We stop thinking about people in terms of us versus them. Stevenson's story of Avery Jenkins and his quest for a chocolate milkshake that he ultimately receives from his prison guard underscores the notion that in many instances, there is very little that really separates us.

Most importantly, Stevenson argues vehemently that "we are more than the worst thing we've ever done." This piece of wisdom certainly applies to those who languish in our prisons, but the truth is that we all have made and will continue to make mistakes in our lives. If we are to function as a just society, we need to find ways to see mistakes as opportunities for not only understanding and forgiveness but also for learning and growth.

Jody Podl is a teacher at Shaker Heights High School.

STUDENT REVIEW

By **Ellie Shafron**

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson tells the compelling story of a lawyer working for clients on Death Row. When I began reading, there were a lot of significant things that stuck out. My dad is a lawyer, so I know a little bit about legal processes from his stories, but it's different when the case is literally life or death. Usually when I read a book, I think about it as something imaginary, but when I started reading *Just Mercy*, it hit me how real this story is.

Every time I read part of the book, I'd put it down and just think, "Wow. This is really happening to real people every day." The idea that there are people on Death Row who are not fairly represented, whether they truly committed the alleged crime or not, is crazy to me. The main lawyer of the story, Bryan, is doing the majority of his work purely because he wants to help these people. He bonds with them, he meets their families, he learns their stories because he wants to save their lives.

The settings of the jail and the places where these families live have a huge impact on how they are treated by judges and juries, most of it being illegal. It confuses me as to how the injustices in this book were not stopped by any higher-ups who saw them happening. There were people who were accused of crimes they didn't commit, who had alibis and witnesses whom they were with—and all of this evidence would be presented to the judge and the jury, and it simply would not be acknowledged.

After reading the book one afternoon, I was talking to my dad about it at dinner, asking him how the judges could do that. I could not understand how those evaluating the case and determining the fate of this man's life were not even looking at the hard evidence.

Ellie Shafron is a student at Shaker Heights High School.

Q&A

...with author Greg Zuckerman

Greg Zuckerman has been writing for *The Wall Street Journal* for 20 years, but he recently turned to a new subject matter for his book *Rising Above: How 11 Athletes Overcame Challenges in Their Youth to Become Stars*. Zuckerman wrote the book with his two teenage sons, Elijah, 14, and Gabriel, 18. Going through the process of putting together the book was a learning experience for all three Zuckermans, and we spoke to Greg about what teens everywhere can learn from these great athletes.

What inspired you to write this book?

Eli came up with the idea; he's a big sports guy and he knew some of these stories. Gabriel's an avid reader; he's got a blog where he reviews books. So he thought it would be a great project to write a book, not just read one. I loved the idea of doing a project with my kids, but I also quite honestly saw it as a project where Eli could get more comfortable with his own difference: he was born with two fingers on his left hand, yet he plays soccer and track. I figured that talking to stars about overcoming their differences, would have an impact on him.

We also had the feeling that everyone would identify because each one of us has differences, experiences setbacks, or lives with insecurities. We hoped that reading about how each athlete overcame challenges would inspire young people and give them encouragement.

Why do you think it's so important for teens to hear these kinds of stories?

Teaching resilience is so important. I've been at the Wall Street Journal for 20 years, and there are many smart, hardworking, ambitious people who can't deal with setbacks.

Was there any common thread you noticed among the athletes you spoke with?

We all assumed that the players would look at their differences and setbacks as challenges that they overcame and dealt with, which is partly true. But a remarkable number of them saw these things as advantages.

Like Tim Howard, a goalie for the United States national soccer team—probably one of the greatest soccer players our nation has ever produced. Diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), Howard suffered as a kid. But it also gave him what his doctor called a hyper-focus, and apparently that's the case with a lot of people with Tourette's. Other kids get bored after a while and move onto playing other things, but he would be able to practice for hours.

Jim Abbott, a retired MLB pitcher, was born with one arm. Despite what might be a disability, Abbott wanted to be a pitcher. In Little League, opposing coaches would have their players

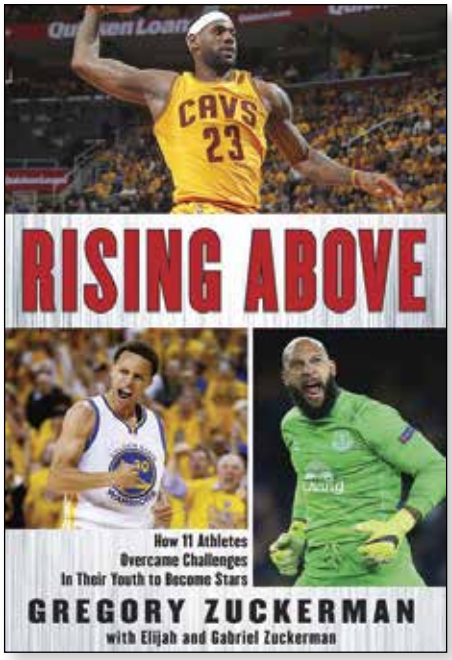
bunt and would take advantage of his physical difference because it would be hard for him to field it. But it forced him to become a really good fielder. When he got to the major leagues, he was one of the better fielders in the pros.

How do your children deal with setbacks?

My eldest is really bright but he didn't do so well on his ACT. He worked really hard and eventually got an impressive score. As a parent, you do not want your kid to have setbacks because they can be heartbreaking, but in the long run the lessons can be invaluable. It's hard as a parent to watch your kids struggle—our temptation is to jump in and protect them. But it's best to let our kids learn to deal with stuff on their own.

Was there any particular message or story that stuck out to you?

The highlight for me was sitting in the dugout of Yankee Stadium before a game with MLB pitcher R.A Dickey. He spent over an hour talking to us. This was a guy who was sexually abused and grew up without much money, and his advice was just find somebody in life, be it a coach, parent, therapist, or school teacher. That's the kind of thing we try to emphasize when we speak to people. Find somebody. ▪



Oh Yeah? You Embarrass **Me** Too!

Here's what you need to know about our oldest son, Yoni.

He's a good-looking guy. But the joy of raising a 15-year-old boy who thinks he is good-looking (and is good-looking) means you spend a lot of time competing with his mirror. I find the constant flexing of his muscles mildly embarrassing, especially when the house is filled with company.

With three younger brothers and one older sister, Yoni often sets the stage for what is and is not acceptable in our family. His hair was a shaggy blond mane for a while, until he shaved off almost all of his hair and vaguely resembled a Marine on leave. A little embarrassing, yes.

The whole dabbing thing embarrasses me, not only when my kids do it, but maybe when anyone does. I'd love for that fad to move on. Yoni sings loudly, and there are definitely a number of songs on his Best Hits list whose lyrics cause me to bite my nails and reach for chocolate.

Yoni is also a runner, and while I admire his determination and focus, I less admire his short running shorts (must they be that short?). I recognize in teenage years it is a veritable given that I am an embarrassment to my children, and I am pleased to see that there are moments when they embarrass me as well.

Devorah Katz, age 43, is the mother of five children who writes for www.challahcrums.com and lectures about parenting in the 21st century.

My mother is okay mostly.

Here are the parts that embarrass me about my mother. She tries to be funny around my friends, and she is not. She is only sometimes ever funny, mostly when no one is around. Sometimes when we give my friends rides, she talks to them and asks them questions … and then more questions … and then more questions.

She spends too much time touching my hair. When my mom rolls down her window and tries to yell at bad drivers, it's very embarrassing. When she thinks she is playing good basketball and she is not, that is embarrassing. When I was cocky and challenged her to a one-on-one in front of my friends and neighbors and she won, that was exceptionally embarrassing. When we watch basketball games together and she pretends to know what is happening—that can be embarrassing. And her sneezes are crazy loud. Very embarrassing. She is still one of my top two parents, but there's room for improvement.

When Yoni Katz, age 15, isn't being embarrassed by his mother, he can be found jogging, taking photos, and making short videos.

EMBARRASSMENT: ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT

Embarrassment is not a trivial emotion; however, it is never something another person can do to you. Usually socially stimulated, it is always self-inflicted.

If you make a mistake in public, even if you are laughed at, you decide to feel embarrassed or not. You decide whether or not to blow the incident off or to give in to one or more of four fears that feed embarrassment.

1. **Fear of exposing oddity or inadequacy**
2. **Fear of being teased or ridiculed**
3. **Fear of lasting damage to image or reputation**
4. **Fear of isolation for appearing unacceptably different**

Parents and adolescents each need to take responsibility for choosing to feel embarrassed by each other—for inflicting this experience of fear upon themselves. That said, they can be forthright about their sensitivities and ask each other not to act in certain ways to which they are embarrassment-prone.

For example, the teenager might ask the parent: "I know feeling embarrassed is up to me; however, it would make life easier when you are spectating my game if instead of loudly cheering and yelling out my name, you could just sit quietly and enjoy watching."

The parent might ask the teenager: "I know feeling embarrassed is up to me; however, it would make life easier when we are together in public around your friends if you didn't act like I wasn't there and something was the matter with me or us, but instead could also treat me in a friendly way."

Don't blame the other person for embarrassing you, but do declare your sensitivities and needs.

Carl Pickhardt, Ph.D., is a psychologist in Austin, Texas, and author of Surviving Your Child's Adolescence. *His next parenting book about adolescents will be out in 2018.*

Grandparents

Enriching the lives of teenagers

Teen

By **Alexis Gross**

I am very lucky to be able to say that I have four amazing grandparents, and I am extremely close with all of them. They are some of my biggest fans and greatest supporters. My Grandma and Grandpa, my dad's parents, live seven minutes away, and I get to spend a lot of time with them. My Bobie and Papa, my mom's parents, live in Rochester, N.Y., which is about four hours away. I don't get to see them as often, but fortunately, we visit each other a lot.

My Bobie and I have always been very close. When I was a little girl, she taught me to read, played along when I asked her to crawl around the kitchen for hours for no reason, cooked for me, bought tons of gifts for me, took care of me, and of course, like most grandparents, spoiled me. Every summer since I was about seven years old, my siblings and I have gone to Rochester for a week or two by ourselves. It is one of the things we look forward to most in the summer.

Our Bobie and Papa let us take over the house and the TV and choose the menu and itinerary. The rest of the year, Bobie comes to every birthday party, show, and special occasion, even if it means waking up in the middle of the night to take the four-hour train ride from Rochester to Cleveland. To her, distance is just a number, and family comes first.

This year Alexis turns 17. I am up for the challenge of our new "adult relationship." We have our memories. Our bond is forged. A grandmother/granddaughter relationship is the very best at any age.

As most teenagers get older and busier, getting together with their grandparents may seem like an inconvenience. When people say things like, "Ugh, I have to try to get out of dinner at my grandparents' tonight," it always shocks me. My time with my Bobie is something I look forward to and wish I had more of. Unfortunately, as I've gotten older, my schedule has become so busy, and when she and my Papa come to visit, I don't have as much time to spend with them.

When I was younger, we spent hours talking about my friends, my school, and everything going on in my life. No matter what I was talking about, I always knew my Bobie would care and enjoy listening and talking with me. When she wasn't in Cleveland, I would call almost every single day to fill her in on everything.

Now, we don't get to have these talks as much anymore, and long phone calls have turned into brief texting conversations. But this doesn't mean that these conversations are no longer important to me. And even with my busy schedule, newer technology, and 258 miles between us, nothing will stand in the way of our extremely close relationship. I am so lucky to say that my Bobie is one of the most special, caring, and amazing women that I have in my life, and that I can call her one of my best friends. And I know that this will never change.

Alexis Gross, 16, is a junior at Solon High School who enjoys singing, performing, and spending time with her family and friends.

Grandparent

By **Deanne Levy**

I was fortunate to have an early bonding experience with my granddaughter because I was present at the miracle of her birth. I saw the cord cut, and I heard her first cry. We stayed three weeks and I fed, dressed, rocked, and sang to her. But there would be a problem. I had to leave. She's in Ohio, and we live in New York State. I began to worry. "How will she know me?" We all traveled back and forth for holidays and birthdays. I still worried. I might not know her favorite cereal, might not be there for a school program, or a recital or Grandparents Day.

When I was with her, I read to her and played paper dolls, games, and Barbies. She made me walk on my knees, and we laughed. I made her a Play Doh "glass slipper," and she took off her sock and put her little foot into it. I taught her to read with "Dick and Jane." We took a Disney trip, and she slept in my room. Can you feel my smile? Yes, it worked. A long-distance relationship is a challenge, but not impossible.

When Alexis was around 7 or 8, the best thing happened. She could come for a week in the summer without parents. Her close-in-age adorable brother came too. "Camp Bobie and Papa" was born. I knew her favorite everything! I took her to movies and lunch and the library. We went to museums and the amusement park. We cuddled at night and talked about everything. We made shadow puppets on the wall. My long living room couch was the "camp bus." Each morning, we boarded and planned the day. She always picked the same activities.

Once I asked, "Alexis, don't you want to something different?" Her answer was, "No, Bobie! These are our memories!"

Last April she turned 16. I waited anxiously. She has been coming every year. She was now a camp counselor and had a driver's license. I would understand. I'm laughing now as I remember her saying, "Bobie, of course I'm coming! I arranged my schedule!" She and her brother wanted their younger sister to have the same experiences and memories, so we still did the same things—even the couch bus.

The arrival of the teen years brought a new challenge ... technology. iPhones and iPads came to camp to coexist with "Bananagrams" and "The Game of Life." I recognize this need, like our radios and comics. But it doesn't replace our time. Alone time is always arranged.

This year Alexis turns 17. She has a car, several jobs, and an upcoming trip to Israel. I am up for the challenge of our new "adult relationship." We have our memories. Our bond is forged. A grandmother/granddaughter relationship is the very best at any age.

Deanne Levy is a wife, proud mother of two, and very proud grandmother, "Bobie," of five. She is a retired medical secretary and was coordinator of the medical department of a large nursing home in Rochester, N.Y.

Professional

By **Dr. Barbara Greenberg**

If you are lucky enough to be a grandparent, then you are in a unique position to play a very special role in the lives of your grandchildren. Most of you are also aware that the viewpoints and values of your children (the parents of your grandchildren) must factor into how you manage your relationships with your children's children. Relationships across the board work best when everyone is on the same page.

As a grandparent, you have a variety of heartwarming opportunities to offer. Consider the following:

1. You can be playful and fun because the job of setting rules and limits is primarily that of the parents.

2. You may have the luxury of spending special and alone time with each grandchild. In these moments, you get to show each child that she is precious and special to you because of her unique essence and personality.

3. You have the wisdom of your years to pass on. Share this with your grandchildren but, of course, only after making sure that you are not offering advice that is at odds with their parents' values.

4. You are in the extraordinary position to enrich the lives of your grandchildren by helping them to understand that their parents, too, are humans and not infallible. Toward this end, consider sharing fun stories about their parents as children and showing family photos from across the years.

5. You can offer your grandchildren a safe space away from home. Every child and teenager benefits from time away from home to relax, decompress, and bask in the attention of a beloved grandparent.

There are many things that parents, too, can do to support the grandparent/grandchild relationship so that it is beneficial for all of you. Most importantly, be clear with the grandparents about what the rules and expectations are for the kids so that they don't inadvertently undermine your parenting.

Express your gratitude to the grandparents because they not only love your kids but they also give you the enviable opportunity to get some alone or adult-only time. Even if your parents or in-laws are not your favorite people, recognize nonetheless that their relationships with your kids can have a very different dynamic, and encourage the connection. If you can, refrain from criticizing the grandparents in front of your kids, just as you don't want the grandparents to be critical of you.

Kindness, mutual support, and respect go a long way in terms of enhancing relationships. Being a parent is a difficult role and the support of grandparents may make your role just a bit easier.

Dr. Barbara Greenberg is a clinical psychologist who specializes in the treatment of teens, children, and families. She is the co-author of Teenage As A Second Language (Adams Media). She writes and consults for several publications and frequently appears on TV. You can find her work on her website drbarbaragreenberg.com

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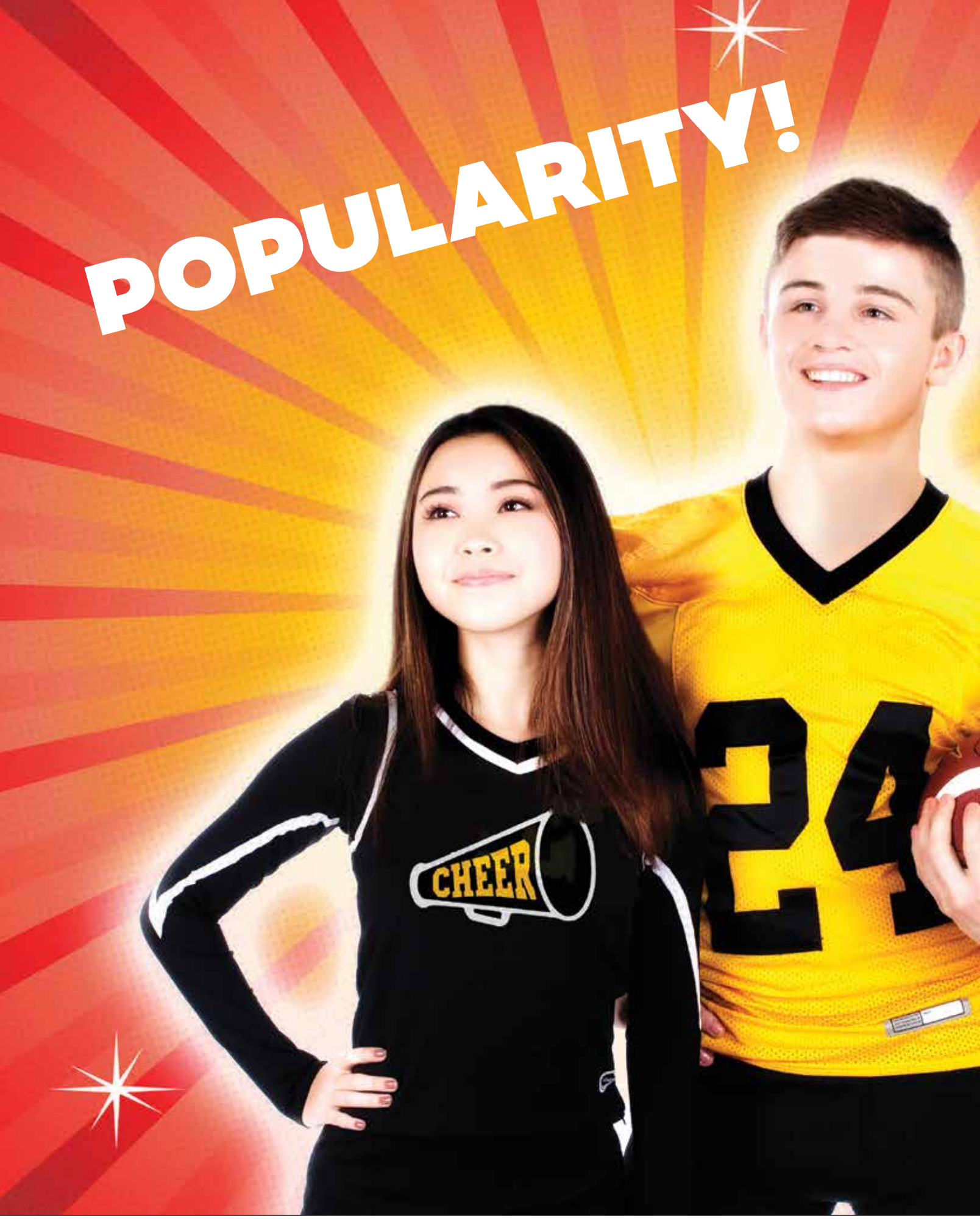

Photo: Beth Segal

Helping Teenagers Build Healthy Social Lives

By **Cathie Ericson**

My 8th grader was dumped by his posse the week before school started. Yep, the Fearsome Five had decided to be the Fearsome Four, and my son was ousted.

As I shared his (my) tale of woe with my squad, they unanimously recommended I talk to the moms—three of whom were friends of mine.

But I decided to hit pause on that plan as I ran through the conversation in my head: "Your kid is being mean to my kid." Even to my Mama Bear ears, it sounded wrong: after all, they're not four. I couldn't see the win, and, truthfully, I worried it might even worsen the situation for my kid. So I decided to keep my mouth shut and let the situation work itself out.

And guess what? My instincts were right on. (That doesn't happen much so let me revel, if you don't mind.) Much as parents want to fix their teens' friend problems, they can't, says parenting expert Rosalind Wiseman, author of *Queen Bees & Wannabes*, a seminal book on adolescent-girl bullying that became the basis for the film *Mean Girls*, and its male-centered follow-up, *Masterminds & Wingmen*.

"Even though it comes from a good place, getting involved in anything related to friends can be super embarrassing to your teen," she says. What's the tipoff that you're about to be *that* parent? It's the moment you hear that self-righteous tone in your head—"I'm going down to that school!" Or, "I'm going to call that mom!"

"Nothing good will come from getting involved," she says. "You are reacting from your own anxiety and can't advocate for your child in a sane and healthy way."

And furthermore, she says, when you dive into the popularity pool, you're taking away your child's power and their ownership of the issue, which is going to make her less likely to come to you the next time.

So what can we do for our kids in their quest for friendship and jostling for popularity? Here are some answers to those questions you've always wanted to ask.

What does a healthy social life look like?

Parents often wonder which scenario is best—a big group of friends or one tight bestie. Each has their ups and, of course, downs—the group shifts loyalties on a regular basis; the BFF is unavailable because of a busy sports schedule, a budding romance, or a fall-out.

Regardless of age, the answer to how many friends you really need depends on your personality and life circumstances, says Irene S. Levine, PhD, psychologist and creator of *The Friendship Blog*.

Some people prefer to have one or two close friends, while others thrive on having a wider circle. "The key is

Photo: Beth Segal

to avoid judging your child's need for friendships by comparing them to other teens or even to yourself," she says. While you might want to be the life of the party, they might prefer a smaller tribe.

One lesson to share with your teen is the benefit of cultivating different friends to meet different needs—maybe Stella is your confidante, but Emma ups your tennis game.

Mari Chazen of Menlo Park, California, says her son once observed, "I love how you have so many different types of friends—your golfing friends, your yoga friends, your college friends, and your cheese club friends." She was gratified because she had tried to model those different types of relationships to her teens, Sam, 17, and Annie, 15, to show them the benefits of diverse friendships.

If your child seems overly reliant on just one kid, it might be wise to help him expand his horizons. Try to encourage your teenager to get involved with other groups, "whether it's by joining a team or club or volunteering," Levine suggests.

And even though transportation may be a pain, it's smart to encourage friendships in other towns if the occasion arises—having a friend outside the school social circle can help smooth over rough spots, especially if, say, your son didn't get invited to the "it" party or all your daughter's friends are attending the upcoming school dance.

What do you do when your kid is left out?

Though having to sit at home alone on a weekend happens to virtually everyone, it still can be agonizing to watch it happen to your kid, especially when she has to watch all of her friends having fun on social media.

"Being left out is tough on a kid and tough on the parent," Levine says. She recommends sharing stories of times when you experienced a similar disappointment and explaining that friendships are often fickle—and that no one can expect to be liked by everyone. And, she says, "Remember that your teen is often more resilient than you might think at the moment."

Of course, your own tales of overcoming friendship purgatory are bound to occasionally—or always—fall on deaf ears. That's when you offer distraction, Wiseman advises. "Say, 'That sucks, and I totally respect whatever you want to do tonight, whether it's eat a pint of ice cream, see a movie, or play music really loudly." And above all, she says, thank your child for trusting you by sharing his disappointment.

When the "being left out" becomes a recurring problem, remember that there is a reason, even if your child doesn't know what it is—or doesn't want to admit it.

"Parents will say, 'Other kids stopped talking to my kid for no reason," Wiseman says. "There's never 'no reason.'" If you want to clue in to what is going on in the social dynamic, you might have to dig a little deeper. She suggests taking a moment when you're relaxed and no siblings are around, and asking your child how other kids might describe him or her.

The goal, she stresses, is not to blame your child for her social standing, but to help her examine what she is doing that might be contributing to the problem. Or, help her understand that maybe some friendships just evolve over time.

What if ... *gulp!* ... your kid is the mean girl or boy?

Sometimes, it's our kid who's the problem. Most of us know a mom who's a genuinely nice person, but has the daughter who is what Wiseman calls "ruthlessly popular."

"We assume the parents don't know, but many do, and they are mortified by their child's behavior and don't know how to handle it," Wiseman points out.

If you sense that your child is the one creating the issues, be sure to talk with her about her antics. If she's actively bullying others on social media, it's your cue to step in. But if she is playing her popularity card in more subtle ways, you may just have to back off.

"It can be cringe-worthy when your child is hell-bent on being popular," Wiseman acknowledges. She suggests parents also examine their own behavior, especially as it relates to social media. "When you constantly post pictures of your own kids and people are responding with comments of how beautiful they are, consider that teens are just trying to get that same response with their posting." That, in and of itself, can be a conversation-starter about intents and reactions on social media.

So what's good about these struggles?

As parents, we know that the socially awkward teen often becomes highly sought after at the high school reunion (See: *Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion*), and, in the best-case scenario, even at the prom (See: Every John Hughes flick ever made).

While painful social struggles are part of life, they aren't limited to young people. "Even adults have to constantly negotiate social relationships in school, at work, and around the neighborhood," Levine points out. "The friendship lessons teens learn will teach resilience and help them become more independent adults who can better handle social relationships."

Of course there are some times that you should truly worry, she adds, noting parents should be on the look-out for sudden changes in a child's eating, sleep, or socialization patterns. "If a teen is suddenly doing poorly in school, isolating him or herself, or lacking self-confidence, definitely check in with your child and consider seeking advice from a counselor or mental health professional."

Other than that, Levine says, parents can always find reasons to worry, but they should look to their children to see whether they are actually unhappy, or if the parents are projecting that on them.

"The bottom line is that we may want one conversation to solve the problem, but steel yourself," warns Wiseman. "You'll be having multiple conversations on the theme of popularity and friendship for years." ▪

TEEN SPEAK

By **Brooke Siegler**

High school can be hard, especially if you don't have a good group of friends to help get you through it. My journey through high school has been a little bit extraordinary. I switched high schools after 9th grade. I went from a large, public, co-ed school to a small, private, all-girls school.

Socially, this was a drastic change for me. Luckily, however, I was able to find a great group of friends who helped me adjust to the changes that switching schools presented.

My new school has no real social structure or hierarchy. Of course there are different friend groups, but I like to think that we are all friendly with one another, and I pride myself on the fact that I know every single person in my grade. Within a grade, there are about four to five different friend groups, but a lot of girls cross over into other groups. When I entered the school in 10th grade, of course nearly all of the girls had found their own group, so I was a fish out of water. Fortunately, I found a group of girls who helped get me acclimated to my new school, and they became my best friends.

My friend group—or "tribe," as some may say—is a little bit, well, peculiar. For one, we call ourselves "inchies," because one day for the school talent show, of which we were the only act, we slid across the stage in sleeping bags like caterpillars. That gives you an idea of the comfort we have around each other. We are not afraid to make fun of ourselves in front of each other, or even in front of our entire school. It took a while for me to get used to this, because at my old school I was deathly afraid of making a fool out of myself. My new friends coached me along and showed me how making a fool out of myself could actually be a lot of fun.

I don't know how I will find a group of girls like them at college next year. I know that they will be lifelong friends, and I am extremely lucky to have them in my life.

Brooke Siegler is a senior at Laurel School in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

By **Jessica Port**

My high school sure had cliques. It wasn't *Mean Girls*-esque, or frightening or petty. There were no assigned lunch tables, no one saying, "You can't sit with us." No one was enforcing the cliques. It's just how it was.

I went to a large high school. I didn't know everyone in my graduating class. I barely knew 20 percent. But I knew which groups tended to stick together. The Wrestling Team. The Football Team. The Drama Club. The Show Choir. The Science Olympiad.

It makes sense, after all. Be friends with people like you, and people you like. Why wouldn't these groups make sense? It's not like I'd been barred entry.

Not exactly.

There was some sort of permeating meanness around these groups. There wasn't much malice between the cheerleaders and the chess team. Heck, weirdly dissonant cliques could overlap. But if you were in, you'd know. If you were in, you were in.

I very rarely was in.

I'd tried out for the school musical once. I like singing and acting, even if my dancing is painful on the eyes. I went to some of the drama club functions, hoping to try out. It sounded fun. A lock-in sleepover, joint dance classes. It didn't occur to me that everyone knew each other already, even the teachers. They all fit together easily.

I didn't make it, likely due to my dancing. I didn't come back. They didn't miss me.

I don't always mesh well with people. I got along with most people just fine, I think. I was never involved in any school drama. I was annoying sometimes, sure, but I don't think anyone outright hated me or excluded me. I just didn't fit right.

I had plenty of interests, and joined plenty of groups. I loved choir, but I wasn't the choir girl. I loved writing, but I wasn't exactly people-savvy enough to join the school newspaper. I was smart, but I didn't even fit in with the smart kids, who studied together and knew what they were doing. I was just a drifter between groups.

Somehow, in all that drifting, I still found others like me. I had plenty of friends who shared interests with me, who stuck out of the other cliques. Video games, anime, singing, what have you. I had, and still have, friends with whom I could share my writing and stories. Friends whom I trusted. My own little disorganized clique of misfits.

I certainly didn't go into high school expecting to befriend a graduating class of 400. I didn't expect, or want, to join every group and every club. I have high school friends that I talk to every day, four years after graduation. Even without fitting neatly into a particular category, I still made friends who loved and supported me.

Jessica Port is a senior at Miami University of Ohio.

When Should Teenagers Speak Up?

By **Sandra Gordon**

Cole Parker's 13-year-old daughter, Asya, had just gotten off the phone with her best friend when she burst into tears. Her friend was in trouble. But when Parker asked his daughter what was wrong, "she didn't want to tell me," he recalls.

Parker, a father of five and president of Divas in Defense, an Atlanta company that offers self-defense classes for women, didn't give up. Instead, he asked questions: *Has your friend hurt herself? Is she depressed?*

Eventually, Asya revealed that her friend was contemplating suicide because she was being bullied at school.

Parker quickly called the girl's parents, who soon found their daughter a therapist. "Then everything got better," Parker says. Still, "Asya felt like she was abandoning her friend by telling me," Parker says.

Teens don't want to blow the whistle on their friends, says Vicki Panaccione, child psychologist and author of *What Kids Would Tell You … If Only You'd Ask!* They understandably dread being disloyal, or worry that their peers may ostracize them if they "tell."

But it's important that they confide in a trusted adult when they learn potentially dangerous information from a peer, from suicidal thoughts to plans for school violence, or if they observe things like self-harm (cutting) or an alarming use of drugs or alcohol.

In potentially life-threatening situations, "the only responsibility teens have is to tell a grown-up," Panaccione says. It's the adult's responsibility to let the proper person know, such as the at-risk teen's parents or the school.

"The guidance counselor can say 'somebody told me' to protect your teen's privacy," Panaccione says.

To help your teen feel comfortable coming to you, don't count on empty phrases such as, "You know our door is always open." Instead, take the time to find out what's going on in your teen's life, in a general way.

"You might say, for example, 'I read about teens cutting themselves. Does that go on in your school?'" says Carleton Kendrick, a family therapist in Millis, Massachusetts.

Or, give your teen a moral dilemma. For example, you could say: "What would you do if you thought a friend was truly contemplating suicide?" Teens know the difference between, "I got an F on the test. OMG! I'm going to kill myself" and "I'm going to kill myself next Wednesday at 2:00 p.m."

By engaging teens in conversation and listening to their opinions when there's no crisis, you're more likely to build the trust necessary to become the confidante when a crisis occurs.

But make sure you're open with your teens about your plan of action. "If your teen tells you something about a friend and you promise not to tell, then you can't tell anybody," Panaccione says. "If you hear that a kid is having sex or smoking a joint, keep it private."

If the situation is life threatening, explain why you must do something. "You could say, for example, 'I know you're worried about your friend finding out that you're the one who told, but how would you feel if she overdosed and died?'"

Panaccione tells her teen clients, "I'd rather have somebody who is alive and pissed off at you than dead because you didn't do anything to help."

Next, explain exactly what you're going to do with the information, such as call the school.

And try not to make judgmental comments about the friend, such as, "She's always been a mess!" No matter what's going on, "Teens don't want you not to like their friends because of something they told you about them," Panaccione says. ■

Jennifer Trachtenberg, M.D., is a New York pediatrician, an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a mother of three.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Is it Contagious?

Teenagers seem to be ground zero for many of the most contagious viruses and infections, spreading them to friends, teammates, and family members. What are the most common things teens catch, and what should your teen know about prevention and staying healthy? We asked Dr. Jennifer Trachtenberg, a pediatrician and parenting expert, for advice.

Let's start with skin infections. What's the common culprit?

Staph is one common skin infection that is caused by Staphylococcus bacteria. Most people already have these bacteria present on their skin and never develop infections. But teens can be susceptible to this kind of infection because they can be in close physical proximity to each other through shared spaces such as locker rooms and weight rooms, and contact sports. Bacteria can spread easily through cuts, abrasions, and skin-to-skin contact, including in the locker room through sharing towels, uniforms, razors, or equipment. It usually looks like a rash of little blisters or red bumps that ooze and may develop a golden yellow, gooey crust. The blisters can be itchy and painful.

Treatment for staph infections is usually a topical antibiotic cream, but if the rash has spread and become systemic, then an oral antibiotic may be prescribed. For prevention, the best practice is to avoid sharing towels, clothing, and sports equipment, and to make sure that you wipe down exercise equipment.

What about pink eye? Poor Bob Costas showed us all how contagious that can be.

Pink eye, or conjunctivitis, is an infection of the eyes that is very contagious. Usually the eye is red and produces a thick, mucous-like discharge, which can cause the eyelid to become crusty and difficult to open.

Viral conjunctivitis usually presents a clear, watery discharge in both eyes. Like any other virus, there isn't really any medical treatment other than cool compresses and wiping the eye with a cotton ball dipped in water. For bacterial pink eye, one eye will be red and infected, and it will then spread to the other eye. Antibiotic eye drops usually clear up bacterial conjunctivitis, and after 24 hours the patient will no longer be contagious and may resume normal activities. Good, thorough hand-washing is the best way to avoid getting pink eye.

What about fungal infections?

Fungus grows in dark, moist environments such as showers, locker rooms, and wet towels that get reused. Fungal infections, or ringworm, will usually appear as a round, scaly circle that spreads as an itchy, red, raised rash. It's kind of a misleading term because it has nothing to do with worms. A common fungal infection is athlete's foot. It can be caused by sweating a lot, not drying your feet well after showering or exercising, or warm weather. Symptoms may include a whitening of the skin between the toes, scaly skin on the feet, an itchy rash, or even blisters on the feet. Another fungal infection is jock itch, which teen athletes can develop in warm weather conditions where they sweat a lot. Symptoms are red, ring-like patches in the groin area, itching and pain in the groin.

For treatment, there are antifungal over-the-counter creams and sprays that contain the active ingredient Clotrimazole. The best way to prevent fungal infections is with good hygiene, washing towels, showering after exercise, and airing out shoes and equipment.

What about sexually transmitted infections?

From the age of 12 on up, I discuss STIs with my patients, both alone and

with their parents. We know that teens can be promiscuous and experiment with sexuality. They need to know that they can be infected without sexual intercourse, and that activities such as touching, petting, and oral contact carry the risk of infection.

Symptoms of an STI may include pain while urinating, pelvic pain, an unusual discharge, or a change in periods. There may be a cold sore on the lips or a sore on the genitals that is painful. For STIs such as chlamydia, there may be no symptoms at all, so it's important for teens to have preventative visits every year if they have a history of sexual engagement. Human papillomavirus, or HPV, causes genital warts and cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine currently covers nine strains of HPV, but not all of them.

Even if your teen rolls their eyes when you bring it up, do it anyway. Talk about prevention and condoms. If your daughter is on birth control pills, she needs to know about condoms and preventing STIs. They need to hear over and over again the facts about the risks of sexually transmitted infections and disease, and how it may affect fertility as they get older.

What should teens know about mononucleosis, the so-called "kissing disease"?

"Mono" is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. Symptoms may vary, including fever, sore throat, swollen glands, fatigue that is more than normal, headache, or flu-like symptoms that don't improve. Many teens wait to see their physician because they keep thinking that they will get better, but they don't get better — and all the while, they continue to attend school and participate in their normal activities and come into contact with classmates and friends.

There is a rapid test your doctor can perform in the office and a blood-work test that usually gets sent out to a lab to confirm a diagnosis of mono. The good news is you can only catch mono once, though in some rare cases you can have a recurrence. Teens need to know, however, that mono can present complications, which although not permanent, can be very serious for some people. First, some patients may develop an enlarged spleen and must avoid contact sports where there is the risk of injury to the abdomen. An enlarged spleen can rupture and present very serious complications. Second, mono can elevate your liver enzymes. Teens need to be very careful about consuming alcohol, which can be toxic to the liver and exacerbate liver damage if their enzymes are already elevated.

Treatment for mono is really supportive, meaning we try to relieve discomfort with lots of rest, fluids, fever, and pain-reducing medicine. If the tonsils are enlarged, then a physician may prescribe steroids to shrink them. The patient should get on a daily schedule of additional rest and whatever class time they can tolerate until they can resume normal activities. As for prevention, limit sharing food, utensils, drinking out of the same straw, or water bottles—anything that puts you into close contact with body secretions. And wash your hands frequently. ▪

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Preparing for Medical Needs in College

Many college-bound students give more thought to their dorm-room décor than campus healthcare. But when Anna R. considered attending Tulane University nearly 2,000 miles from her Los Angeles home, it was the school's excellent hospital that sealed the deal. There, Anna knew she could receive the critical drug infusions she needed every four to six months to treat her rare autoimmune disease, juvenile dermatomyositis.

Although Anna was a strong advocate for her own health, it wasn't easy to let her go to school across the country, says her mom, Carol S.

"A lot of my friends thought I was insane to let Anna go," she recalls. "But she really wanted to live a normal life. I think depending on what kind of illness or medical needs your student has, it's really important for them to take that on and for you to think of it not as a scary thing, but as empowering for them."

Even if your student doesn't face serious health challenges, freshman year may be the first time she takes charge of her own medical needs. Since you won't be there to administer doses of allergy medicine and ibuprofen, she'll need to know how to address basic concerns and where to turn if she gets sick.

"Don't think that you are going to drive two, or four, or six hours to get your student and whisk them home if they are sick," says Sarah

Waters, director of residence life for 15,000 undergraduates at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. "We have great medical professionals and counselors right at the university."

Instead of showing up on campus with chicken soup after illness strikes, parents need to be proactive, says Waters. Discuss health history and potential challenges long before your student leaves home. Help them understand basics like how to schedule a doctor's appointment and refill a prescription. Make sure your student understands the many services available at the campus student health office, including flu shots, contraceptives, and lab tests.

Severe allergies, asthma, and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or ADHD are among the most common health problems for college freshmen, Waters notes.

If your student suffers from chronic medical issues like these, research resources together before school starts. If you anticipate that your student will need specialists off campus, use freshman orientation to meet with potential doctors and plot transportation to appointments, she adds.

Sometimes students find that a novel environment, new friends, inconsistent meals and sleep, and access to alcohol can interfere with medications and health routines, notes Dr. Kitty O'Hare, director of transition medicine for primary care at Boston Children's Hospital.

Students who took medication in high school for conditions like ADHD or anxiety may also view freshman year as an opportunity to reduce or stop their prescriptions, a decision that can seriously impact their health or academic success.

"I encourage kids not to stop cold turkey, but to go see whoever is prescribing their medicine and talk about it before they stop, and before they go to school, so they can discuss the pros and cons," O'Hare advises. ■

Is your student ready to manage her medical needs?

Ask yourself these four questions:

1

Has she ever spoken to a doctor without you?

Many medical professionals encourage patients to advocate for themselves as early as 12 to 14 years old, says O'Hare.

2

Does she need special accommodations on campus?

Contact the school disabilities services office at least six months before school starts to make housing or academic accommodation requests, advises Waters.

3

Does she understand when an ailment is an emergency?

Student health services can often treat minor injuries and illnesses like the flu, colds, and fevers. However, a student with severe allergies who experiences trouble breathing should know to call 911, Waters counsels.

4

Are her health records complete?

File detailed health records with her college. Document an emergency healthcare plan, and store it on her cellphone. The Apple iPhone, for example, has a health app that allows users to list information on medical conditions, allergies, and medications.

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Amazing Species: Life at the Limits is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (amnh.org)

Why Family Game Night is More Than Family Game Night

By **Diana Simeon**

Playing board games is a great way to spend time with your teenagers. But did you know that family game night is also a great way to teach teenagers some really important skills?

"By learning to be good at games you learn how to listen, how to pay attention, and how to be a good loser or winner" says Nicole Burt, Ph.D. a curator of Human Health and Evolutionary Medicine for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

And that's just for starters. Then there's what games can teach teenagers about problem solving, creativity, risk taking, and working with others.

"Our school system tends to train teenagers to think, 'Well what's the answer?'," says Burt, a biological anthropologist who's also the co-creator of the game Origins: A Journey of Natural Selection. "So, a lot of kids, particularly by the time they are in high school, aren't necessarily used to

Great Games for Your Next Family Game Night

Strategy Games

Settlers of Catan
Ticket to Ride
Carcassonne
7 Wonders

Social Games

Origins: An Evolutionary Journey
Apples to Apples
Code Names
Taboo

Oldies, But Goodies

Trivial Pursuit
Monopoly
Clue
Risk

The cooperative nature of these games is also valuable, helping teenagers learn to work with others toward a goal.

thinking about problems creatively."

Strategy games like Settlers of Catan, Ticket to Ride, and Carcassonne are great ways to develop your teenager's problem-solving skills, but even old-school games like Trivial Pursuit can do the trick. "I grew up playing Trivial Pursuit and a lot of people think you either know the answer or not, but that's not the case," says Burt. "It's a game that you can often logic your way through."

Adds Burt: "Being able to figure things out is so much more important than just knowing a lot of facts, in terms of being able to function at a job or function in the world."

That's a big part of the objective of Origins, which Burt and her partner, Dr. Mindy Pitre of St. Lawrence University, started developing while in graduate school at the University of Alberta. The goal was to help their students learn the material in their classes.

"We both taught anthropology and osteology—the study of bones—and they are really hard classes. They both have a lot of lingo and a lot of information that students have not had before," explains Burt.

In addition to helping her students master the material, Burt also found Origins encouraged students to take risks in the classroom they may not have otherwise taken.

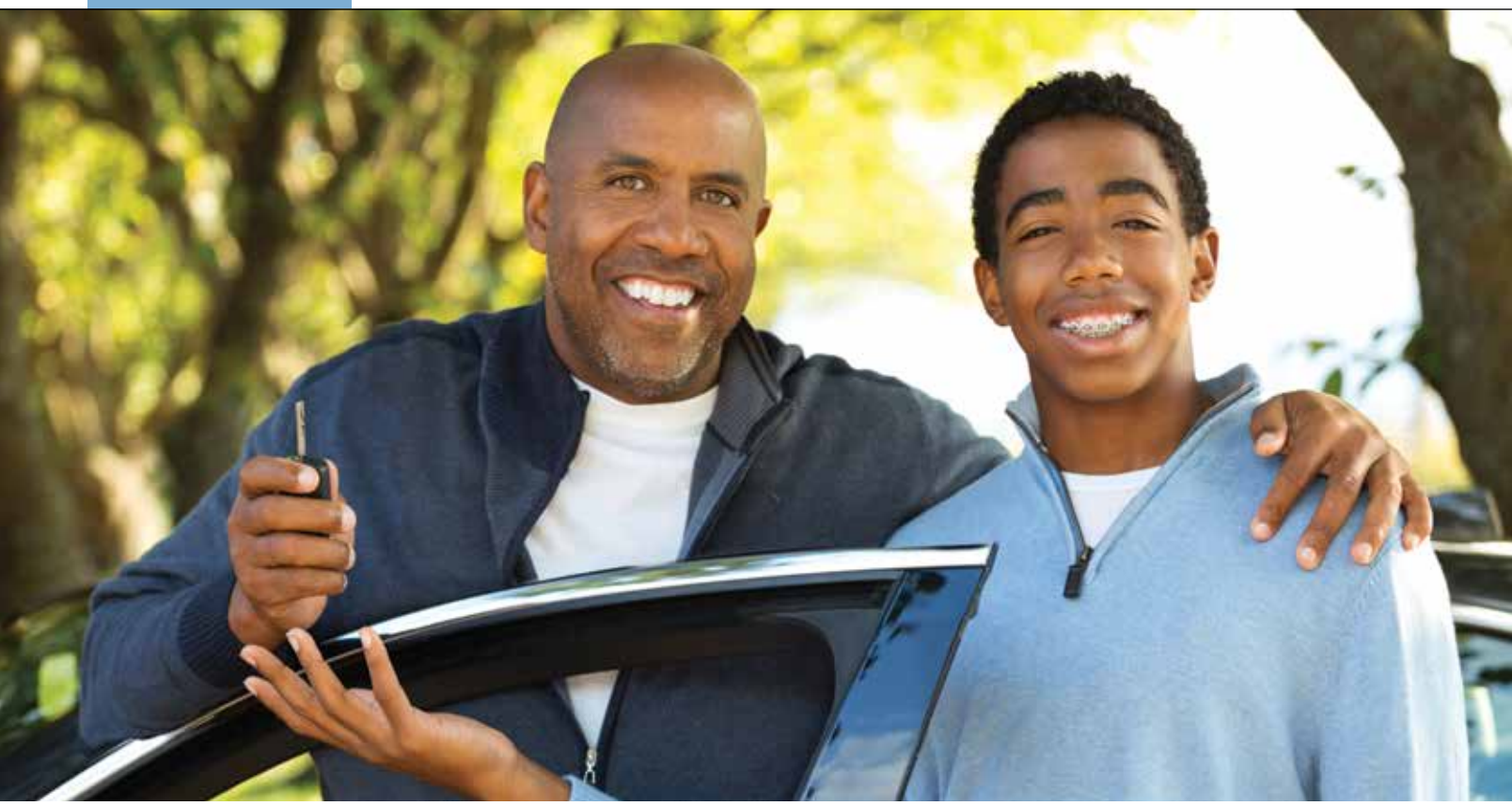
"They learn to jump in and engage with the material and that it's not just about getting the right answer," explains Burt.

You can do this at home with games like Apples to Apples, Taboo, and Code Names—and others in the category of "social games."

"These are games that are more open-ended, where there are a bunch of answers and the players have to discuss them," notes Burt.

The cooperative nature of these games is also valuable, helping teenagers learn to work with others toward a goal. "That's so useful for how the world actually works. Most of us have to work with other people to figure things out."

So, when's your next family game night? ▪



How to Save Money on Car Insurance

By Joanna Nesbit

You may know already that insuring a young driver is expensive. Our insurance rate doubled when we added our 16-year-old daughter to our policy. If you're insuring your teen soon, now is a good time to research costs. It's also a good time to discuss driving privileges. Here's a few things to consider.

Why Teens Cost So Much

Car accidents are the leading cause of death for teens ages 16 to 19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teens are three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than people ages 20 and older, and boys are more of an insurance risk than girls for several reasons, including a greater likelihood to speed, not use seat belts, and not identify hazardous situations. Sixteen-year-old boys cost the most—an average increase to a family's policy of 109 percent—but all young drivers represent risk for insurance companies, according to InsuranceQuotes.com.

How to Save

1. Shop for discounts.

You may be eligible for discounts if your teen has at least a 3.0 grade point average or resides at boarding school or college 100 or more miles away without a car. (Rates and rules vary by state.) You can also save money with low annual mileage, higher deductibles, and bundling with other policies. Some policies allow a teen to be insured on just one car—which also means the child must only drive that one car.

Start with your insurance agent and ask whether you're getting every available discount, suggests

Jeanne Salvatore, senior vice president of the Insurance Information Institute. "It's important to take into consideration the service you're getting with your current insurer," she says. "If you've filed a claim and you were pleased with the service, take that into account." But also compare rates on a site like InsuranceQuotes.com, or enlist the help of an insurance broker.

2. Involve your teen.

Young drivers have no idea what auto insurance costs and why. Florida personal injury attorney Michele Ross understands it well and recommends making cost a family conversation. "Have your teens go through the quoting process with you so they understand how expensive it is," she says. Getting them involved also helps them understand the relationship between safe driving and insurance rates. Consider making good grades a prerequisite for driving privileges, or requiring your teen to pay his portion of insurance.

3. Require driver's education.

My state requires driver's ed classes for students under 18 to be eligible for a license, but not all states do. Statistically, however, students who take driver's ed are less likely to have an accident because they're better prepared for the road. Driver's Ed classes can also save on insurance rates.

4. Add your teen to your policy.

Generally, insuring a teen on your policy is less expensive than buying a stand-alone policy because teens benefit from your preferred rates. However, Ross says it's always worth asking about both. To save further, skip letting a teen have her own car (which will be much more expensive to insure).

5. Drive less expensive cars.

"High-performance or more expensive cars will be more expensive to insure," Salvatore says. "Balance those considerations with having a car that's easy to drive and protects the occupants." (Note: Experts also caution that teenagers shouldn't automatically get the old family car, which may not be as safe as a newer model.)

6. Delay the license.

For every year older your teenager is, your rate decreases slightly. When your teen does hit the road, she's a smidge more mature. But keep in mind, teens benefit from lots of practice behind the wheel, so don't delay too long. You'll want your teenager to earn a license while you can still supervise the process.

Other Policy Changes to Consider

Your auto insurance policy will also include liability insurance, which helps pay for any damage your teenager may cause to another person (this is called bodily injury) or their property. Every state except New Hampshire requires motorists to have a minimum amount of liability insurance, but those minimum amounts are often inadequate. For example, in Ohio, the minimum amount required for bodily injury is just $25,000 per person ($50,000 per accident). The amount for property damage is just $25,000 per accident. Consider if your teenager is at fault in a major accident. Those amounts would be unlikely to cover all the costs, which means you will have to pay the rest out of pocket.

Increasing your liability coverage can offer peace of mind, doesn't cost a lot, and could cost you less in the long run if your teenager does cause a major accident. How much is enough? Ross recommends $100,000 each in bodily injury, property damage, and uninsured motorist coverage (which covers you if your child gets into an accident with a driver who has no insurance). But since rules vary so much by state, it's best to speak with a local agent who knows your situation.

Adding a teen driver to your insurance is also a good time to purchase an inexpensive umbrella liability policy. In the case of a car accident, umbrella liability covers any costs not covered by your auto insurance liability limits. For example, say your teenager causes a serious accident and you settle a lawsuit for $500,000. Your auto insurance pays up to its limit, say $200,000; the umbrella insurance will pay the remaining $300,000. Again, speak with a local agent about how much umbrella insurance is enough for your family.

A final way to save: consider raising your deductible on your premium. However, savings vary by state—anywhere from 6 to 29 percent—and may not be great enough to warrant a change. Again, check with your agent. ▪

Photo: Beth Segal

Who Do I Want To Be Today?

By Michelle Icard

Middle school is when kids begin to try on adult identities to figure out who they want to be. They come to realize that they don't like certain things that their parents do or think, and want to make their own decisions, pick out their own things, and figure out their own likes and dislikes.

If there's one question a middle-schooler asks himself more than any other, it's "Who am I?" This is the existential crisis of every tween. The slow, steady realization that he is not, in fact, a parental "Mini-Me," and that he has both the opportunity and obligation to be something separate. This can be exciting … and confusing.

But just as it's impossible to look at a shelf full of jeans in the department store and instantly know which ones you're going to like the best, so too is figuring out who you want to be.

Building a unique identity isn't a forgone conclusion and requires some rocky years of trying on those new clothes, new behaviors, new friends, and often a complete new sense of self. Your child might play in the band, become a student representative, try out for a new sport or a part in the school play. Who knows, she could be great at performing, right? She has visions in her head of being the next Emma Stone in La La Land, so when her new persona draws criticism, it sends a definite message: You're not good at this. You're not good at being you.

This is one of the main reasons why self-esteem is tender in middle school.

It's hard to manage the whirlwind. Your son tries something new and fails. Your daughter tries something new and then gets bored and discards the new passion after three months. You're adding up the tally of clothes they had to have that are now in the corner of the closet, and lessons and instruments and sports equipment that are no longer

being used. Hold yourself back from thinking this way because kids who don't experiment may end up feeling less confident as adults since they haven't gone through the trial-and-error phase of testing. It's a hard stage to live through as tweens, and it's hard to watch as parents, but the more we can help our kids see the possibilities that await them on the other side, the easier it will be.

When someone gives you the side-eye after you propose a new idea in a meeting, or no one compliments your new haircut, you may feel momentarily upset, but not defeated. As adults, we can separate who we are from other people's perceptions, and criticism doesn't bury itself so deeply in our core. Much of that resilience is rooted in teenage experimentation.

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

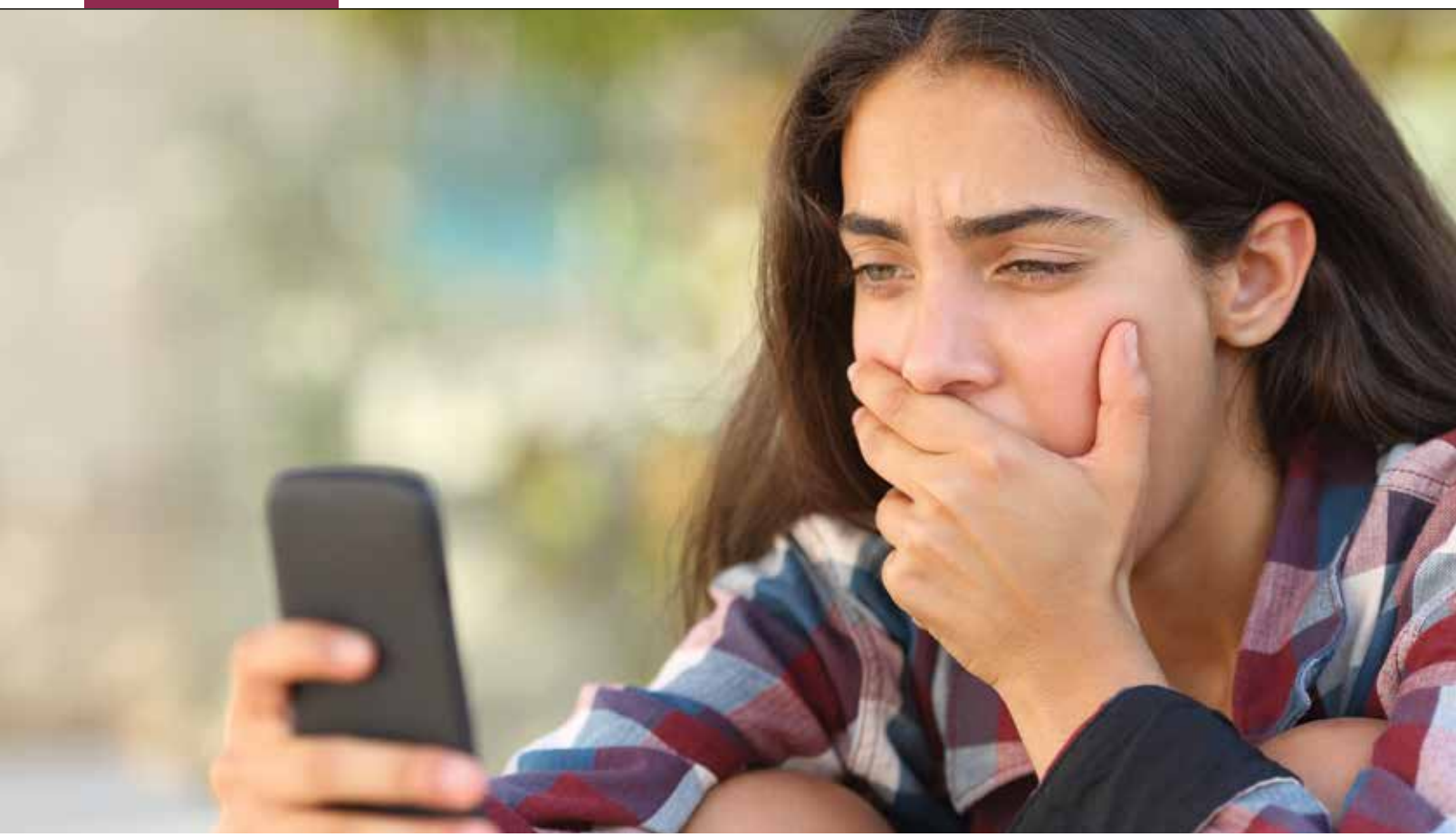
How Can You Help?

Besides trying to fund this whole experiment (which is a lot), there is something you can do to promote healthy self-esteem in tweens. If you've ever watched the sitcom The Goldbergs, you're familiar with uber-mom Beverly Goldberg and her "mom goggles," through which she sees everything her kids do as perfect. We all wear our mom goggles from time to time, and our kids know it. When we say, "You are the funniest, cutest, greatest kid I know!" we mean it, and it is meaningless to them because they expect you to say it.

Try this tweak: try it on someone else's kid.

Twice in my adolescence, I remember an adult outside of my family telling me about myself. When I was 13, a grandmother (not mine) told me I was going to be pretty. Feeling like the constant misfit, I clung to her prophesy with hopes that I wouldn't always have the wrong haircut, big glasses, an awkward smile, and the wrong jeans. It buoyed me through times of isolation to think that someday I might fit in. And when I was 14, an English teacher scrawled at the top of a creative writing assignment, "You are a writer." In my quest for figuring out my identity, I had always focused on what I wasn't: I wasn't pretty, I wasn't popular, I wasn't an athlete. But here, in print, was someone telling me what I was. I felt inspired and wanted to explore this new version of myself, one who suddenly had possibilities. Perhaps you can have this impact on a tween you know.

When it comes to supporting your own kids, instead of repeating the same old compliments, look for the unexpected. If your child is the family comedian, telling her she's so funny won't have much impact. But noting how calmly she negotiated the neighbor kids' dispute and telling her "you are a mediator" will be more memorable.



Be Kind Online

Hands off the keyboard until you are calm.

By **Jane Parent**

Kids have been bullying each other for generations, but with the introduction of technology, the current generation of teenagers has the ability to expand the reach and extent of their harm. This phenomenon is being called cyberbullying, which has been defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of communication technologies including text messages, instant messaging, social media, video uploading sites, and even video games.

According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, 25 percent of teens admit that they have been cyberbullied at some point in their lifetimes. About 17 percent admitted to cyberbullying others. As for middle-school students, 12 percent admitted they had been cyberbullied, while 4 percent said they had cyberbullied others within the previous 30 days.

Cyberbullying manifests itself as teens using technology to "to hurt, harm, and humiliate" their peers, says Julie Hertzog, director of the National Bullying Prevention Center in Bloomington, MN. "In some ways," says Hertzog, "online bullying can be even more devastating than traditional bullying, as an aggressor is able to access an audience 24/7 instead of being confined to the schoolyard, and the kid being bullied can't escape the bullying."

And the hurt can be worse, as "the person being bullied can read and re-read a hurtful text or comment on social media, and experience the hurt over and over again," Hertzog states.

So why is cyberbullying a growing problem? First, more teens have access to the internet than ever. According to a 2015 Pew Research Center study, 92%

of American teens report going online daily, and 74% access the web on their mobile devices. Second, kids are getting cellphones at increasingly younger ages. According to the research firm Influence Central, the average age when children get their first smartphone is now 10, and for some children, as young as seven. Even if parents think their child is not on social media, children are using their phones to connect through social means with group texting and instant messaging. Kids are using gaming consoles such as Xbox Live that have an interactive aspect, as opponents can message each other or talk live through headsets.

"These interactions can be anonymous," says Hertzog, and "kids at younger and younger ages are being exposed to behavior that parents don't necessarily anticipate or fully understand."

So what can parents do to prepare their kids to be savvy online? Nancy Willard, the Director of *EmbraceCivility.org* in Eugene, Oregon, has developed strategies to help educators empower students to embrace civility. As kids approach the age of puberty, she advises parents to instill two key attributes in their kids. First, mindfulness. "This means hands off the keyboard until you are calm," says Willard. "Do not post or press 'send' when you are upset or emotional. Every kid needs to understand the very high likelihood that actions taken when they are angry or upset will either backfire or have significant negative consequences."

Second, encourage problem-solving, so your teen can think through a situation and strategize solutions. "You want your son or daughter to feel empowered not only to think through what outcome they would like," advises Willard, "but also to make sure that those solutions are in line with your family's values."

If you learn that something bad has happened online to your son or daughter, what should you do? "Your message to your teen should be 'You don't deserve this; we support you; and we're here to help you,'" says Hertzog.

Willard recommends three rules for online activity: (1) You will only interact online when you are calm; (2) You cannot control the behavior of other people, you can only control how you respond; and (3) Hold yourself tall. "Your posture and bearing affect how you feel about yourself," says Willard, "and send a message to others. Stay calm, put your shoulders back, and stand tall while you think through a situation."

And above all, remember the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you—even online. ▪

Arianna Huffington

Arianna Huffington has worn many hats during her career—including as founder of The Huffington Post—but with her latest venture, Thrive Global, she's on a mission to help all of us lead more rewarding, less stressful lives. And that includes helping us get a decent night's sleep. We talk with Huffington about her recent book, *Sleep Revolution*.

Research shows the majority of teenagers are sleep-deprived. How does not getting enough sleep impact our teenagers?

The impact can be severe, and sleep is a particular problem for teens. Studies have shown that insufficient sleep is directly linked to stress and anxiety in teens. And with the distraction of technology and school start times that are too early across much of the country, a high percentage of our teens are not getting adequate sleep.

If teenagers need 8-10 hours of sleep, what is the damage and long-term effect of missing several needed hours of sleep each night?

Chronically missing sleep can have the same negative consequences for teens as adults: a heightened risk for an array of physical and mental health problems, including heart disease, obesity, stress, anxiety, and depression. And for students, missing sleep can also mean lower academic performance.

How can parents help their teenagers sleep better?

The first thing parents should do is model good sleep behavior—because showing the behavior we want to encourage is better than just demanding it. Also, parents should guard against overscheduling their children. Kids need downtime—it lets them think, be creative, connect with themselves, and recharge. Parents should also be careful about the effects of technology—all de-

vices should be turned off well before bedtime and charged outside the bedroom.

What are your sleep rituals? What kinds of sleep rituals work best for teenagers?

Everybody is different, and no person's ritual is going to work perfectly for someone else. But the important thing is to have a ritual—a set routine that tells your body and mind that it's time to begin to say goodbye to the day and prepare for sleep.

I treat my own transition to sleep as sacrosanct. First, I turn off all my electronic devices and gently escort them out of my bedroom. Then, I take a hot bath with Epsom salts and a candle flickering nearby—a bath that I prolong if I'm feeling anxious or worried about something. I don't sleep in my workout clothes as I used to (think of the mixed message that sends to our brains), but I have pajamas, nightdresses, even T-shirts dedicated to sleep. Sometimes I have a cup of chamomile or lavender tea if I want something warm and comforting before going to bed. I love reading real, physical books—especially poetry and novels that have nothing to do with work.

For teenagers, some or all of these might work. But what is most important is to put down technology and not let social media bleed into your nighttime routine.

How can parents help teenagers learn to prioritize sleep for themselves, so when they go to college, those practices are in place?

There are things the entire family can do to create a family ritual, like having everyone put their phones at a recharging station outside their bedrooms. Also, so young people will be able to take responsibility for their own good sleep habits when they're in college, parents should start giving teens responsibility early on. This means not just telling them when to go to bed, but educating them about the benefits of good sleep habits, which will give them internal motivation to do it themselves.

What should parents do when their teenager has a paper due the next morning? How can teens balance academic demands with enough sleep?

Well, the best thing for academic performance is good sleep. And keeping regular work habits, and regular sleep hours, will usually prevent the need for those all- or late-nighters.

What are some specific ways to help teenagers who can't get to sleep?

The first thing is to identify what the barriers are. If it's too much homework, maybe the answer is not scheduling as many after-school activities—so that this time can be used for homework, instead of having to do it later at night. If it's too much technology and social media, it can help to get in the habit of putting technology away earlier in the night, and doing something else you enjoy, like reading or listening to music. Exercise and getting enough physical movement during the day can also help. For those who feel anxious or overwhelmed by their workload, writing down your to-do list on a piece of paper—in essence, unloading it from your mind to something external—can help take away some of that anxiety.

Do you see any progress in the movement to push back school start times?

Yes, more and more school districts are realizing the wisdom—and the necessity—of later start times. But so far, way too few. This is something on which the science is clear, and the education world needs to catch up.

How have you taught your own daughters about the importance of sleep?

Mostly by modeling it—that way, they see I'm serious about it. Plus, they're able to see the real benefits of me getting more sleep because I'm much more present for them.

Moving away from sleep, you dealt with some tough issues when your girls were teenagers. Your daughter was brave to talk about her cocaine addiction. Did you have any reservations about her going public?

Not really. It was her story to tell and to do with what she wanted. I was proud when she went public, especially because of the reason—to give encouragement to others.

Your younger daughter is a self-described introvert. Was it hard for an extrovert to parent an introvert?

It wasn't hard, since one thing you quickly figure out as a parent is how different children are, and how much they are their own people. That's one area in which my younger daughter and I are different, but there are many others we share. Once you realize they're not going to be copies of you and let that go, it's actually incredibly inspiring watching your children grow into themselves.

Your daughter dealt with an eating disorder. Do you have any advice for parents of young teenagers?

Communication is key. And the way to keep the lines of communication as open as possible is to try to have as little judgment behind it as possible. Any person with an eating disorder is getting plenty of negative feedback internally, so simply getting more criticism won't do much good. What they need most is your support.

Any other advice for parents of teenagers?

Just to try to enjoy the ride through adolescence as much as possible—and realize that it does end at some point! (Which is good for both parents and teens to remember!) ▪

What to Do About Your Underachiever

By **Rebecca Meiser**

Linny Smith* has graduate degrees in both social work and education. So she assumed, naturally, that whatever problems her own two children encountered in the classroom—whether emotionally or academically—she'd be able to help them. When her 14-year-old son, who continually measured in the highest echelons of IQ tests, first started getting Bs and Cs, she knew just what to do: She helped him make test guides. And talked about the importance of establishing daily study habits. And gave examples of how important grades were to his future.

But to Ginny's utter frustration, none of these things seemed to resonate. "He's unmotivated by grades. He doesn't feel an incentive to get the highest scores. He just doesn't see the value in it," she says.

It's not that Ginny needed her son to get straight A's. It was the fact that he didn't seem to care about what results he got at all. He was underachieving, which is a very different phenomenon than a child simply not performing well at school.

"Underachievement refers to young people who are performing more poorly in school than one would expect on the basis of their test scores or other indices of basic mental abilities," explains Robert McCall, co-director of the Office of Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh. "Poor achievement is when a child performs modestly or poorly, but at a level one might expect of that child's abilities and circumstances." Underachievement, on the other hand, "can be a child who gets C's and B's when he or she is capable of getting A's, or gets C's and D's when capable of getting B's."

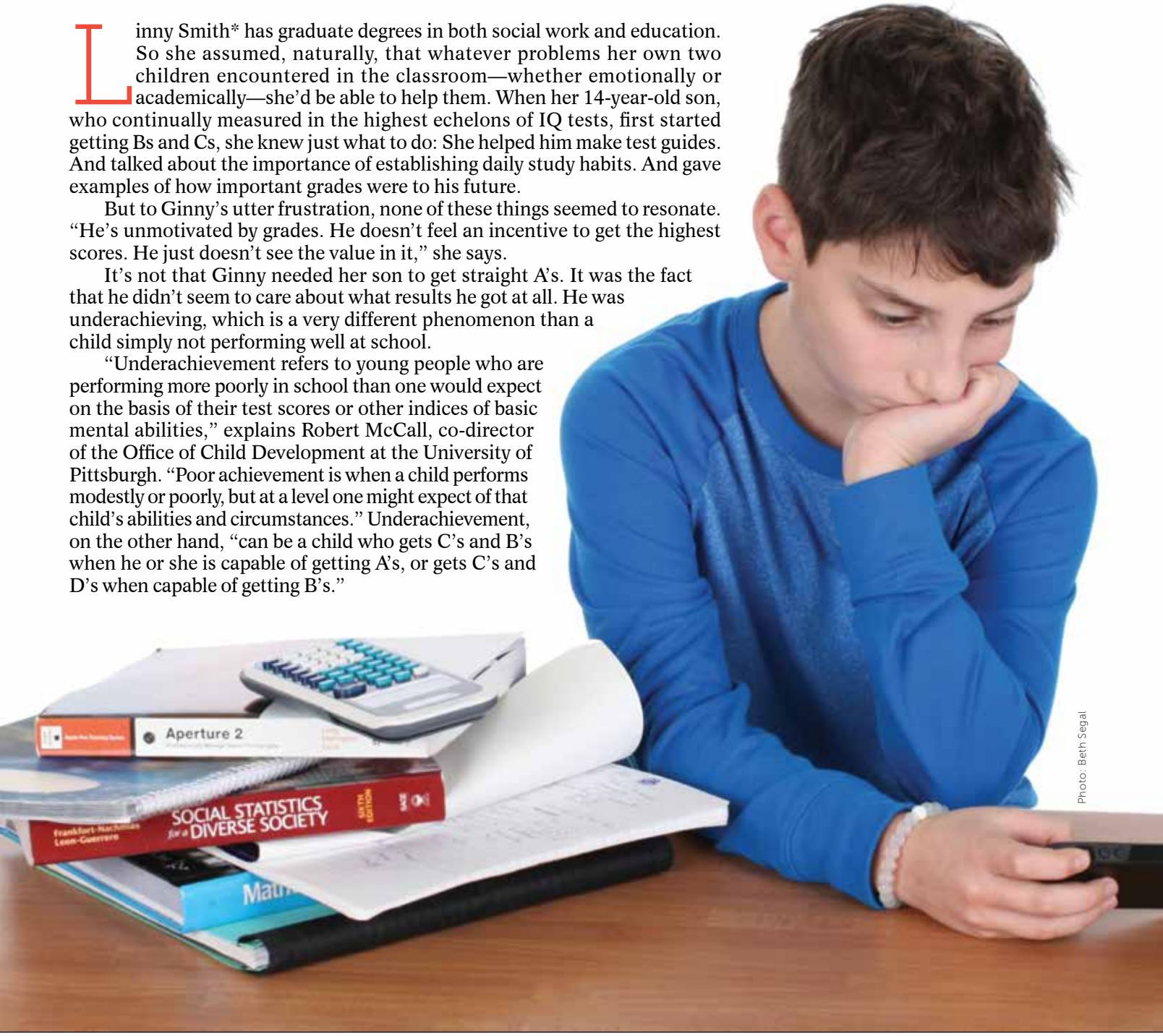


Photo: Beth Segal

When it comes to underachievement, the disparity between capability and results can really get under the skin of a parent. If only Suzie would just apply herself, they think. Yet a lot of times when teenagers underperform, it has more to do with fear, than with laziness, experts say.

"They worry they won't be smart enough—and so they start using words like 'boring' to describe their academic work," says Dr. Sylvia Rimm, director of the Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland and author of the book *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades*. "But 'boring' doesn't really mean boring at all. It means I'm scared to make an effort because maybe even if I make an effort I still might not do well."

Many underperformers were, in fact, once over- or average achievers; they were likely accustomed to not having to work too hard to do well in school. But as the academics got harder in middle school (or high school), they never developed the tools to deal with it. "They define smart as easy, so if work is hard, they think they must be stupid," Rimm says.

Checking out—or feigning indifference to schoolwork — gives them an easy out for not meeting their own or others' expectations. As a parent, then, one of the best things you can do to help your teen get over these fears is to spend more time complimenting him on his efforts rather than his results.

"Give your teenager the message that we expect you to be a hard worker and do your best. And if they do their best, you'll be satisfied with the grades," Rimm says.

It's important also not to make excuses for your teen. When a child is more of an outside-the-box thinker, it can be easy to label him as a "creative type"—giving your teen tacit permission to bow out of work and assignments. And conversely, it also "gives your child the message that they always have to think and act differently or creatively—thus putting pressure on them not to conform even when it's appropriate," Rimm says.

If you are concerned that changes in grades might be related to an underlying undiagnosed issue like ADHD, talk to your child's doctor. But once you've ruled out any medical issues —and tried to get your child extra support — you might have to do the hardest thing of all: Swallow your ego and accept that your teen just does not have the same goals as you. "Our rule now is that our son can't get C's for the grading period," says Smith, who admits to struggling daily with these revised expectations.

And at the same time, she admits that she can't help but admire her son a bit for his attitude. "I think in some ways the attitude he has will serve him more on this planet than the monkey who just jumps through hoops," she says. "My friends remind me that if I talked to any mom of a Silicon Valley executive about how their child was in school, I'd probably hear similar stories." ■

**Not her real name*

Not Measuring Up to Our Expectations

By **Amy Kaufman Burke**

"My son is gay."

Over the years, friends have spoken those words.

"My daughter is gay."

Some spoke so low I could barely hear. Some cried. These are loving parents, LGBT allies. One couple—shaken and tearful—is same-sex. They turned to me for a safe place to react.

My children and I are straight, but my background is a bit unusual. I was born in 1958, to heterosexual parents who were entirely comfortable with LGBT+. There was no Great Divide between homosexuals and heterosexuals. From the cradle, lesbian, gay, bi, trans, straight have been my spectrum of normal.

When we meet our children at birth or adoption, we bring a book's worth of unconscious expectations. Sooner or later, our kids tend to kick those assumptions to the ground. Two super-athletes produce a poet; two physicists sire a basketball player.

I grew up in the film industry, which was a spectacular mismatch. I hated performing, spoke quietly, refused to wear make-up. Worse, my favorite activity was reading. To complicate matters, I had "The Look"—thin, blonde, boobs; everyone knew I'd become an actress… except I was a committed nerd. I knew the feeling of carrying a core identity that didn't match expectations.

As moms and dads, different issues derail us. One musician is fine with a gay son, but horrified when he shelves his violin to become a surgeon. A Republican mom brags about her surgeon daughter, but is appalled that she's a Democrat. An English professor is proud of his Ph.D.-pursuing son, but ashamed when he leaves the program to become a chef.

When our children catch us by surprise, we lose our balance, and a complex journey begins. As parents, we need to give ourselves a bit of empathy. Our initial reactions may clash against our own values—not because we're bad people, but because we're irrevocably human.

The problem is not when adjustments are challenging, even excruciating; the problem is when parents refuse to adjust, stuck in a mindset, causing a rupture in their relationship to their child. The problem worsens when they shove the responsibility onto their children—try to force their son to squelch down his identity, their daughter to recreate herself in the image of parental expectations.

We're all emotionally imperfect. We can be decent to the bone, and still ambush ourselves with "wrong" feelings. However, once we recognize our feelings, we can change. Owning those feelings—even the feelings that are ugly—is a crucial part of human decency, and of parental love. My friends all rebuilt their views of their daughters and sons, to match their children's true selves.

Forgiveness is an essential piece of this process, as is apologizing for the hurt we cause those we love. There's no shame in apologizing to your daughters and sons; in fact, there's tremendous integrity. Sometimes, we need to stretch to forgive ourselves for our wrongness, our parents for their mistakes, our children for knocking us to our knees.

Development is a lifelong process. We help our children grow, and they help us do the same. At some point in the future, a friend will have a daughter or son come out, and they'll turn to you. Further into the future, they'll turn to your kids. From this experience now, you'll know how to create a safe place for them.

So turn to each other, call a friend, talk to a professional. If you're stuck, don't give up. Even if you're a work-in-progress, place your arms around each other's shoulders—poet, lesbian, surgeon, straight, chef, Republican, scientist, professor, gay, athlete, Democrat, actress, nerd.

Daughter, Father, Son, Mother.

Family.

Amy Kaufman Burk is a blogger, novelist and mother of three grown children. Before writing fiction, she was a therapist for 25 years. Her first novel, *Hollywood High: Achieve The Honorable*, is about the teen experience, and addresses high school bullying. Her second novel, *Tightwire*, is about a rookie therapist who grew up in the film industry, treating her first patient, who grew up in the circus.

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

Waste Not, Want Not

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman

It was never worth asking—the answer was always "no."

I thought that our parents didn't want to spoil us, or that we didn't "need" whatever it was we desired—a toy at the store, a candy bar, a soda from the vending machine. Frankly, I don't even remember asking—the answer was obvious.

It wasn't until years later that I realized the reason "no" was the default answer—there was no extra money. We weren't poor—we were the middle class of years ago. We had what we needed, but there wasn't room for the extras. Every grocery item was the store brand—Acme pretzels, Acme toilet paper, Acme cheerios. I didn't know brand loyalty was a thing until I went to college.

Fast forward to 2017.

I watched in awe as my mother eyed a Lands' End jacket that my sister gave my brother-in-law as a gift.

"Wow. That's really nice," she said, as she touched the fabric. "This would be great for Dad."

Dad—the man who spends hours in the dollar store, hits three grocery stores to save 25 cents on bread, and drives an extra 15 miles to save 3 cents on gas.

"Oh—here it is," she said, adroitly navigating her iPhone and ordering the same Lands' End coat for my dad. No sale, no "need," just a pure want.

"It'll be here in 2 days—it'll be perfect for the evenings."

Two minutes from start to finish. I want, I get. Who was this woman?

Just then the college kids entered the room.

"Did you use the Chipotle gift card I sent you?" Mom asked my son.

Mr. I-love-food-particularly-free-food replied immediately. "Are you kidding? I used it the day it arrived."

"Well, here's another one," she said, handing him another gift card.

College kid #2, my niece, prefers Panera, and before I can finish the thought—out pops another gift card for her.

"Thanks Mom Mom," they say in unison, as they pop up to hug her.

Is this the same woman who thought it was just fine for me to eat every meal in the disgusting dining hall in the late 80s? It sure looks like her. I eye my sister, and mouth, *what the hell*?

The conversation turns toward dinner for the next night, always three meals ahead of where we are. After much discussion and checking OpenTable for reservations, we make the decision to cook in. As we prepare the grocery list, my mom keeps chiming in.

"Don't buy that. I have enough chicken."

"No, don't buy paprika, I have that."

"Don't buy three heads of romaine. I have some lettuce left from Tuesday [today is Sunday] night—we can use that—just buy one more head of lettuce. Oh, and I have a coupon for the dressing—hang on."

It goes on and on—finding ways to save on this item, not have too much of that item, buying just enough so we don't waste anything (which in her eyes would be an epic fail).

That's when it hits me. Nothing has changed. Their penny-pinching ways are still front and center. Their cabinets are full of store-brand cooking oil, nuts, dressing, seasoning, toilet paper.

There's still not a lot of "extra." But the reins have clearly loosened, just enough to indulge the six grandchildren—and maybe even themselves a bit.

We went out to dinner the next night—our "usual" for New Year's Eve. I marveled at the six teenage children, the hearty food, my parents' collective good health, the banter at the table. I felt so grateful.

"Our treat!" she declared when we went to pull out our wallets. I eyed my sister again.

But I didn't bat an eye when my mom pulled out her coupon.

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