

THE SECRETS OF HAPPY FAMILIES: INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE FEILER

YOUR TEEN™

for parents

PLAY BALL!

HOW ADULTS FOUL UP SPORTS

ESPN reporter
Jamie Little shares

**CAR CARE
TIPS FOR
TEENS**

Advice from
sports educator and
former NBA player

BOB BIGELOW

ASK THE DOCTOR
Irritable Bowel
Syndrome

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Breaking the Silence

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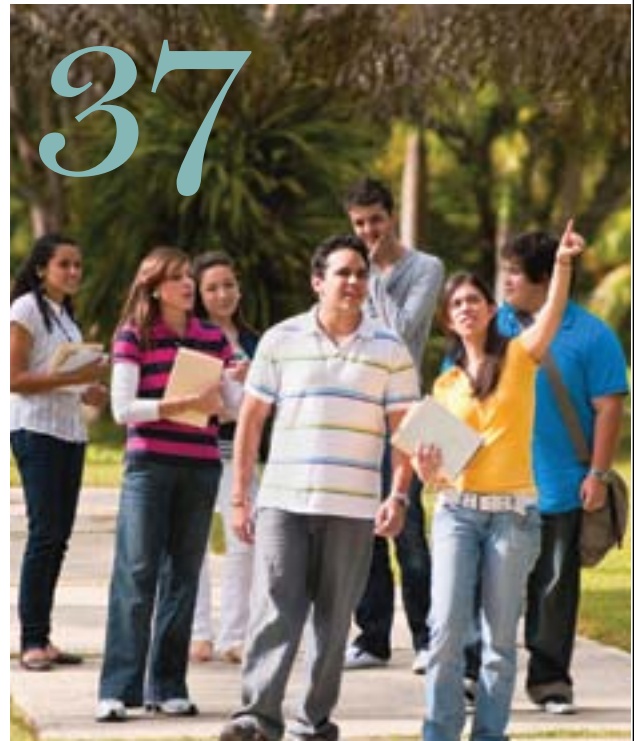
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PHOTO: BETH SEGAL

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COVER PHOTO BY BETH SEGAL

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for parents



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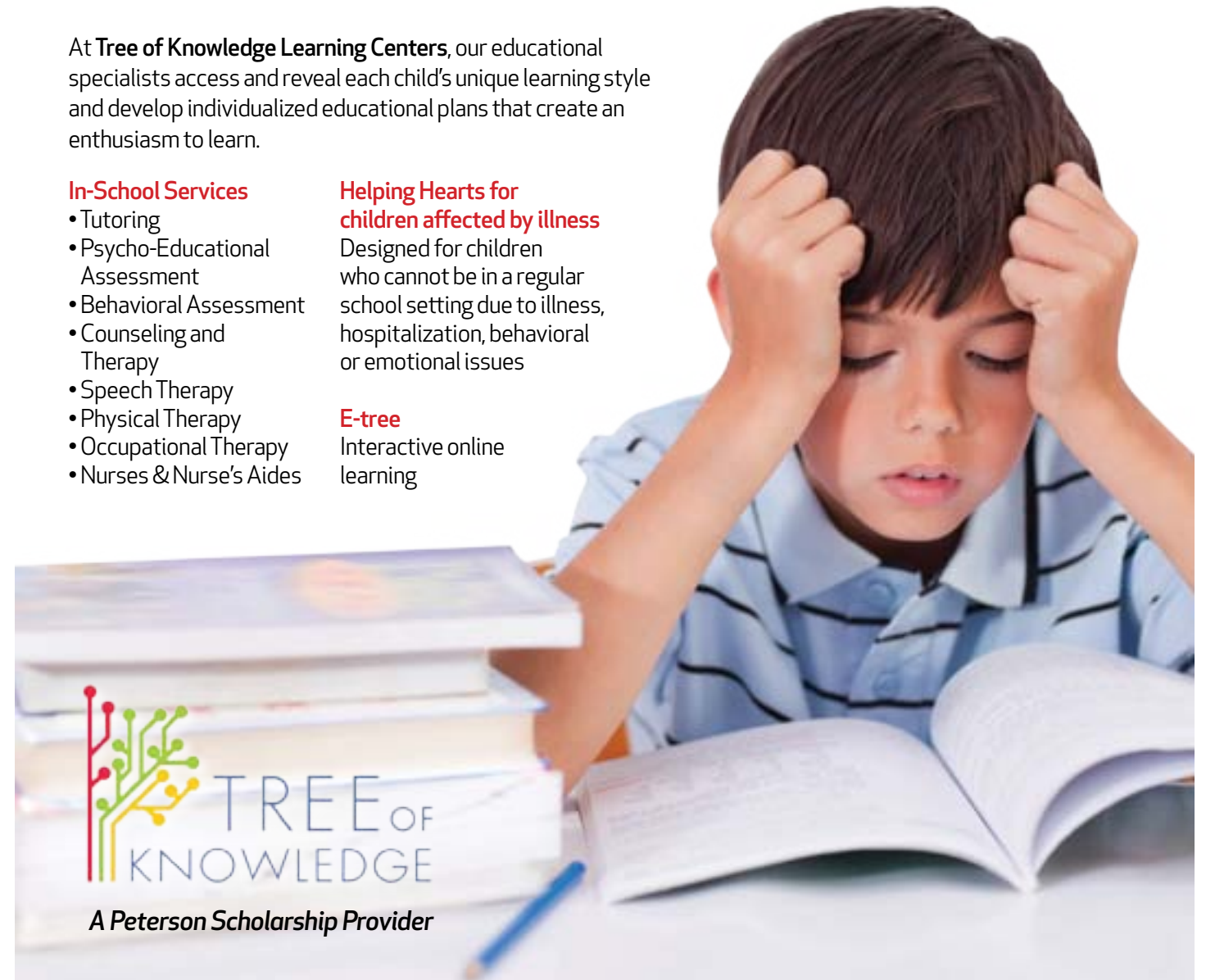
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I am sitting at my daughter's basketball game, watching her dribble the ball down the court, with determination but little talent, when the woman next to me yells, "Pick up the pace, what are you doing, throw the ball..." Her criticism of my daughter REALLY rubs me the wrong way. Why wouldn't it? So, I turn to this woman and say, "That's my daughter."

Silence. Followed by a slow, almost imperceptible shifting of her body away from me, until I realize that she is no longer sitting next to me. We are both a little embarrassed and uncomfortable.

I have often sat at my kids' sporting events (kids, by the way, who showed little passion for athletics) and wondered why I am invested in their athletic success. The truth is, when I am away from the court or field, I don't care one bit. But seated on a bleacher, something happens.

Yes, I want a team win. Mostly, though, I want my kid to have a feel-good moment, whether a basketball three-pointer, a tennis ace, a "something" at lacrosse (I never did learn the rules of that game) or a spike over the volleyball net.

I am unclear where that caring comes from, but I am very clear about this—don't sit my kid out for an unfair portion of the game; don't make my kid feel bad; and don't, DON'T, criticize my kid.

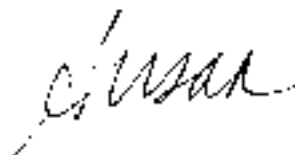
What happens to parents when it comes to sports? Some evil force takes over our thinking selves and morphs us into the dreaded "sports parent." Well, many smart people have taken to studying this phenomenon, and this issue's feature by *Your Teen* Editor Diana Simeon reflects their wisdom and advice.

I feel very fortunate—through *Your Teen*, I have access to such wisdom and advice that improves my parenting (although my kids might not agree). In preparation for my interview with *New York Times* Best Selling Author, Bruce Feiler, I read his new book, *The Secrets of Happy Families*. The biggest take-away for me was to be mindful of my family in the same way that I am mindful of my friendships and work. I hope the interview will inspire you to read *Happy Families*.

In stark contrast to happy families, *Your Teen* picked a difficult topic for Triple Points—domestic violence. One-in-four: the statistic for women who will experience domestic violence. We felt a responsibility to tell this story. Yet even with its prevalence, we struggled to find people willing to share. And so, we learned another lesson: domestic violence remains shrouded in secrecy. We owe a debt of gratitude to the brave people who were willing to speak out. Thank you.

We appreciate your comments and questions at *YourTeenMag.com*. Keep submitting your Ask the Expert questions; the answers are posted on the website.

Enjoy the read.



YOUR TEEN FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



Bruce Feiler

Who doesn't want to know how to have a happier family? We sure do, so this issue *Your Teen* caught up with Bruce Feiler, the *New York Times* columnist and author of six *New York Times* bestsellers, to hear about his latest book, *The Secrets of Happy Families*. Some of Feiler's recommendations—like weekly family meetings—may surprise you.



Leslie Morgan Steiner

Shortly after graduating from Harvard College, Leslie Morgan Steiner met the man of her dreams riding the New York City subway. Little did she know that the relationship would end with him nearly killing her in an apartment in a small New England town. Morgan Steiner shares her journey in this issue's powerful series on domestic violence.



Bob Bigelow

"Don't ever bark out directions. Don't ever yell at a referee. It's not your game," sums up Bob Bigelow, author of *Just Let the Kids Play* and former professional basketball player (Celtics, Kings, Clippers). Find out why Bigelow believes parents need to "slow down" when it comes to sports and their teenagers.



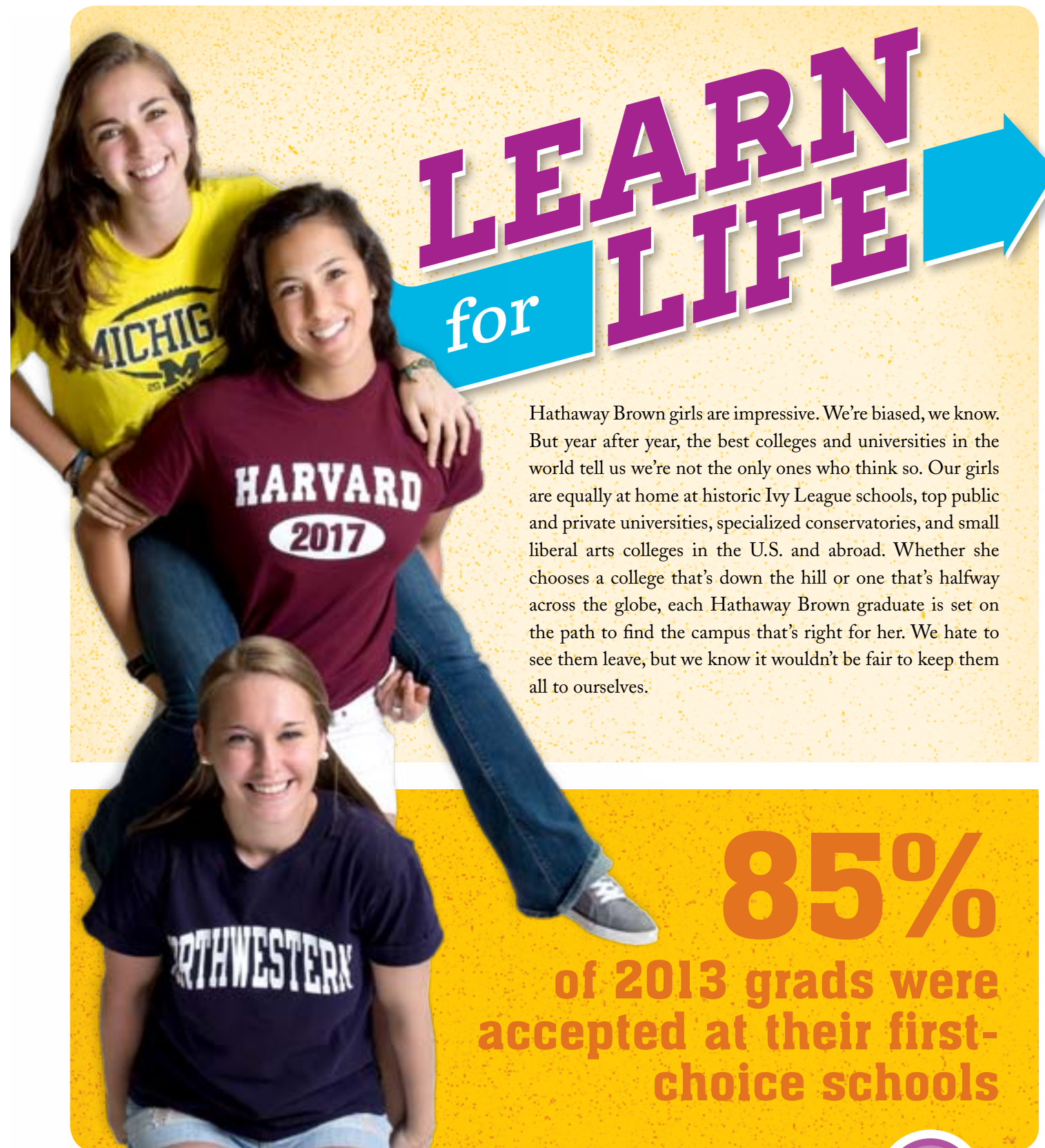
Jim Thompson


What's one way to improve athletics for all of our teenagers? Insist on great coaches, says Jim Thompson, founder and executive director of the Positive Coaching Alliance. "If you are a coach who wins a lot of games...but your players don't want to play for you anymore, then you are a failure as a coach, no matter how many games you win."



Jamie Little

Giving teenagers responsibility for taking care of the car is a great way to make them more responsible overall, says Jamie Little, a NASCAR pit reporter for ESPN. Little, who started tinkering with cars when she was a teen, shares her top car-care tips from her new book, *Essential Car Care for Women*.



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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CPAS, WWW.AICPA.ORG



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OF ADULTS SAY FAMILY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THEIR LIVES.

PEW 2010



37%
OF ALL TEENS HAVE SMARTPHONES.

WWW.PEWINTERNET.ORG, 2013



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Circulation Specialist Eca Taylor used the Falcon Dust-Off Ultimate Screen Care Kit and fell in love. “I used the cloth on every screen—computers, iPads, Kindles, phones—and went crazy cleaning them all. The cloth was a dream for most screens but the truly gross ones required the non-aerosol Advanced Screen Spray that worked like magic.” shopfalcon.com



THERMACELL MOSQUITO REPELLENT LANTERN

While mosquito season wasn’t in full swing yet, Creative Director Meredith Pangrace took this lantern outside when gardening and was happy to see it kept flies and other pesky flying creatures away. “It’s cute, portable, and beats having to spray myself with smelly bug spray before going out into the yard.” thermacell.com/mosquito-repellent/lanterns



UV SKINZ SUN BLOCK CLOTHING

Wondering how to protect your family from the sun this summer? Publisher Stephanie Silverman and her crew will be wearing UV Skinz, a line of UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) 50+ clothing started by a mom who lost her 32-year-old husband to melanoma. “It is really lightweight and very comfortable. Totally something I would wear,” said Stephanie’s son Zach. uvskinz.com



GOODY GOOD STUFF SNACKS

Sales Associate Lisa Golovan tasted a piece of Goody Good Stuff and said, “This is REALLY good!” She loved the flavor and texture. And that was before she knew that Goody Good is vegetarian and contains no artificial flavors or colors. GoodyGoodStuff.com



THE MOTOROLA TALKABOUT

Publisher Susan Borison’s husband and son (lovingly known as Phil and Luke from *Modern Family*) love the Motorola Talkabout MT350R Radios. With a 35-mile range, flashlight and weather channel, the fun/trouble is endless. While they will be great for their intended purpose—for use when out of cell phone range camping, hiking, etc.—the radios open up ample backyard adventures. motorolasolutions.com

Staff Corner Favorite Family Movies

Looking for something to watch with your entire family, something even your teenagers will enjoy? *Your Teen* staff recommends their favorite family movies.

- **Kicking and Screaming.** Mindy Gallagher loves this great family movie with lots of laughs.
- **Searching for Bobby Fischer.** Shari Silk highly recommends this movie about a gifted child, family relationships and achievements that last a lifetime.
- **Safe Haven.** Lisa Golovan loved the combination of a romantic love story and a mystery with an unexpected ending.
- **The Truman Show.** Diana Simeon appreciated this movie's message—life is better when it's not perfect.
- **Mr. Holland's Opus.** Stephanie Silverman loves the idea that an individual (and in this case, a teacher) can have such a large ripple effect on others.
- **Ferris Bueller's Day Off.** Katy Fishman loves this hilarious, family-friendly classic that never goes out of style.

DRIVING CHECKLIST

Got teenage drivers in your house? Then teach them a thing or two (or six) about taking care of their car. Jamie Little, who covers NASCAR for ESPN—and who was the first female pit reporter for the Indie 500—bought her first car in high school. Now, as the co-author of *Essential Car Care for Women*, she gives us her top car-care tips:

1. **Check the oil.** "It's simple to do, and if it's low, it's easy to add more," Little says.
2. **Check the coolant.** You can check it just by looking at it and, like the oil, it's a no-brainer to add more.
3. **Check the tire tread** (the grooves in the rubber on the tires). "Bald tires can lead to big accidents," Little warns. Measure the depth of the tread—which should be a half-inch—with a penny. "It should go halfway up, and it should be even all around," she says. If the tread is less than that, it's time for new tires.
4. **Check the air pressure.** Low pressure can lead to accidents and add to the gas bill. (Keeping tires properly inflated will get you better gas mileage.) "Buy a tire gauge and learn to use it," Little suggests. Check your driver's manual for the right pressure per inch.
5. **Clean the car, inside and out.** "By being expected to take care of the car, your teenager will learn to have pride in it," Little recommends.
6. **Keep talking to teenagers about putting the phone away while driving.** "It's so tempting to text when you drive, so I recommend turning the phone off and putting it in a bag in the backseat or in the trunk," Little says.

SUNBURNS Are Teens Getting the Message?

Raise your hand if, as a teenager, you drenched yourself in baby oil before heading out in the sun. Thankfully, today's teenagers know a lot more about the risks of sun exposure, right?

Well, no.

In fact, a 2012 study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that while 50 percent of fifth graders said they used sunscreen "often or always," that number dropped to just 25 percent by eighth grade.

Blame it on vanity. About 50 percent of fifth graders said they liked tans, compared to almost 80 percent of eighth graders.

Unfortunately, experts say that not using sunscreen will put those teenagers at risk for skin cancer later on. The research also shows that regular episodes of severe sunburn before the age of 18 can increase risk for the most severe (and deadly) form of skin cancer, melanoma.

So, talk to your teenagers early and often about the importance of using sunscreen. Experts recommend an SPF of at least 30 (which blocks 97 percent of the sun's rays).



Blackened Fish Tacos

We're always on the lookout for easy summer meals, so when Robert Cabrales of *Paladar Latin Kitchen* offered us his recipe for fish tacos, we said "Yes, please!" Perfect for a warm summer's evening.

INGREDIENTS

4 (6-ounce) tilapia fillets
4 cups green cabbage, shredded
24 corn tortillas
2 tablespoons olive or canola oil
blackening seasoning
12 lime wedges
mayonnaise
pickled jicama, red onion and pineapple slaw

For the Pickled Jicama, Red Onion and Pineapple Slaw

1 large jicama, julienned
1 small red onion, julienned
1/3 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
4 cups rice wine vinegar
dash of turmeric
dash of vanilla extract
1 cup diced pineapple
fresh cilantro

DIRECTIONS

For Tacos

For each tilapia fillet, cut off the thin belly piece and slice the loin lengthwise in half, leaving you with three equal-sized pieces. Heat a heavy bottomed skillet with oil in it. Coat the fish with blackening seasoning and sear in the hot skillet—turn occasionally to prevent burning for about 4 minutes.

Warm tortillas in a dry skillet over medium-low heat. After tortillas are warmed through, transfer to a clean cutting board. Use two tortillas per taco. Apply the mayonnaise, then the cabbage, cooked fish, and slaw. Garnish with fresh lime wedges and serve with your favorite Latin side dish, we like rice and beans.



PHOTO: TRG REALITY

For the Pickled Jicama, Red Onion and Pineapple Slaw

Combine brown sugar, salt, vinegar, turmeric, and vanilla in a pot and bring to a boil. Allow to boil for 5 minutes. In a heat resistant bowl, mix the onion and jicama and pour the boiling liquid over the vegetables and allow to cool. Strain the cooled vegetables and mix with the pineapple and cilantro.

Yield: 4 servings, 3 tacos per serving.

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Bulletin Board

We asked our readers...

Have you ever said, "I promise never to repeat my parents' annoying habits?"

TEEN ANSWERS

My mother always says we are not allowed to watch TV on weekdays and to do homework instead. I will never do that because when you are a kid it is quite annoying.

Liza, Sudbury, MA

My mom always tells me to bring up my clothes from the laundry room, but her clothes are always down there for a while too.

Katherine, Sudbury, MA

My mother often starts questions by saying, "Let me ask you a question," which drives me crazy. Just ask the question!

Karen, Sudbury MA

I will never be as unorganized as my mom. It works for her, but it would not work for me.

Tori, Providence, RI

I will never rent a Chevy Malibu for a family of five to drive 15 hours to North Carolina. I will never let my younger kids bypass the age limits set for the older kids (for ear piercing, personal cell phone, etc.)

Emma, Cleveland, OH

I will never prevent my kids from putting up posters in their room in order to preserve the wallpaper.

Christian, Cleveland, OH

I will not stop buying food for the kids at home because the other kids are in college.

Hannah, Beachwood, OH

Sometimes when my mom has something to say to me,

she says it extremely loud, not realizing that I am right next to her! I will never do this when I am older.

Jessica from Sudbury, MA

My mom always walks around the house in her loud clogs. My family and I always make a joke about how loud it is, and I swear I won't do that when I am older.

Meghan, Sudbury, MA

PARENT ANSWERS

My parents would press me to call my grandmother. I loved my grandmother but resented being told by my parents to call. Fast forward 35+ years. I find myself reminding my kids to call their grandparents. And I KNOW they love their grandparents and they get just as annoyed as I did.

Pearl, West Orange, NJ

Every day before school my mom would inspect my hair. I have wavy hair so brushing it made it look worse. Every day before school, I always yell out, "Brush your hair. It's the law." And they yell back, "No, we don't like how it looks brushed. It gets too puffy."

Maura, Brooklyn, NY

I was never going to obsess about my children's eating habits and weight like my mother did, but I completely do!

Katie, Cleveland, OH

I remember watching my Dad sweep out the garage and thinking, "Get a life—why would you sweep out the ga-

rage? Who cares? Doesn't he have anything better to do?" Now, on the first day of spring, my husband and I sweep out the garage! And I think of my Dad every time!

Mindy, Solon, OH

Paying my kids for a foot massage. Asking my kids to make me some popcorn. I hated it when my mom did it and now I do it.

Eric, Chicago IL

Keeping the refrigerator stocked with healthy food. Carrots, spinach, apples? How can anyone make a snack out of that?

Craig, Cleveland, OH

The list is long. I make my kids write thank-yous immediately. I cook what is convenient, like mashed potatoes from a box. I insist they finish everything on their plate.

Suzanne, Scituate, MA

I can name that tune in one word. Yelling. The second answer would be in six words. Calling my kids the wrong names.

Deborah, Solon, OH

My mother would lick her thumb and then use it to wipe something off my face, like Peanut butter or jelly that landed randomly on my face. I did it the other day to my youngest and she looked just as horrified as I used to.

Sarah, Natick, MA

"Children learn what they live."

Practicing What You Know

By Dr. Wendy Cunningham

As an adolescent psychologist, I often hear teens say, "I won't do that when I'm a parent." I also hear parents say, "I told myself I was going to do it differently than my parents, but I do the same things." Despite intentions to be "different," parenting approaches often resemble our parents' styles. In short, "children learn what they live."

Knowing that teens often emulate their parents' behavior, parents must be self-aware and pay attention to their own emotions and behavior. Do this by asking yourself questions:

- How did I respond to that situation?
- What was my goal and why?
- How was I feeling, and did I express or manage my feelings effectively?
- Did I set appropriate expectations?
- Did I model the behavior that I want my child to show?
- How did my teen experience that situation?

It may also be helpful to ask, "How did my parents handle that situation when I was kid, and what was it like for me?" Often parents accept approaches that they experienced with the idea of, "I survived it and did okay." However, it can be extremely valuable to consider what it was really like and identify modifications that can positively impact you and your teen as well as generations to come.

Wendy Cunningham, Psy.D. is a clinical psychologist at Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital.

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Book Recommendation

What The Family Needed
by Steven Amsterdam

ADULT REVIEW

By Laura Guggenheim, English teacher at Lake Ridge Academy

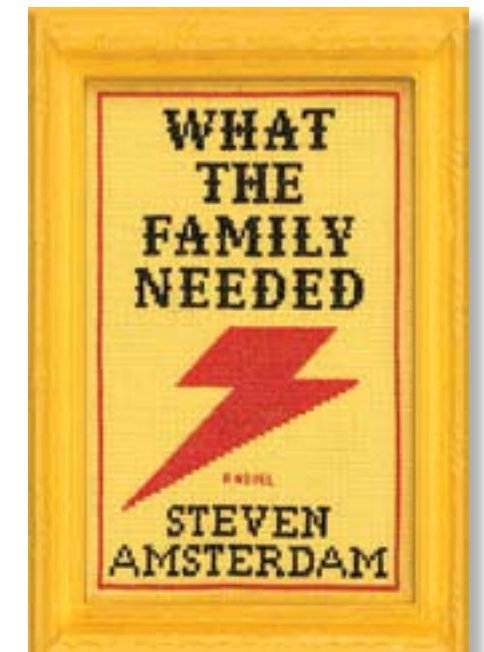
Steven Amsterdam's novel, *What The Family Needed*, follows one family as they negotiate challenges that so many face: divorce, parenting, identity, a spouse's death, relationships, and so on. Each chapter is narrated by a different character during a crisis moment in his or her life, and Amsterdam treats each character and crisis with the same respect and vivid prose. What sets this family and their struggles apart is that, during these moments, they develop superhuman qualities that help them to overcome whatever difficulties they currently face.

And yet, despite being graced with amazing gifts, the characters retain their humanity. It is, perhaps, the contrast between their realistic human problems and their impossible superhuman gifts that helps the reader to see that we all feel invisible sometimes, that we all get lonely, that we each experience loss and have the ability to move on, somehow. Each of us, despite how ordinary we seem, can be superhuman, sort of.

The struggles the family faces over 30 years are universal and will touch a nerve with readers. Younger readers may iden-

tify with the alienation felt by Alek, a teenager whose parents struggle to understand him. Although his superpowers allow him to change aspects of the past and present, Alek still has a teenage sensitivity toward his parents and their clumsy attempts to control his behavior. Older readers might identify with Ben, who is struggling with a loss of identity as he negotiates being out of work, caring for his toddling son, and surviving an increasingly passionless marriage. When he acquires the ability to fly, he finds that he can reengage with his child, his wife, and himself. Other readers might identify with Peter, who loses his spouse. Though Peter gains the ability to change the present, he finds that he still cannot change the past and undo the decisions that lead to his wife's sudden death.

Ultimately, Amsterdam's book is optimistic because it focuses on the strength and power that we sometimes forget we have. It combines honesty and wish-fulfillment in a satisfying way. How many of us, at some point in our lives, haven't wished to be invisible or to fly? Though *What The Family Needed* doesn't sugarcoat the real pain of life, we see how each character has the ability to



make a real contribution and become precisely *what the family needs*: a hugely empowering concept for parents and children. ■

TEEN REVIEW

By Amanda Chow, student at Lake Ridge Academy

Every kid, at some point in life, has wished for superpowers. In elementary school, my friends and I wished for invisibility, being able to fly or even super strength. We loved to dream of saving the town from evil super villains. We also loved to read books about ordinary people gaining powers and using them to become heroes.

Steven Amsterdam's *What the Family Needed* is a novel about ordinary people gaining superpowers. Except, this family doesn't use their powers to fight bad guys. Instead, they use them to learn more about themselves, understand others and come to terms with their own identities.

Each chapter tells the story of a different family member. The novel begins with Giordana, a young girl who has just arrived at her Aunt Natalie's house with her brother, Ben, and her mother, Ruth, after leaving her father and their old home. Giordana has always felt a bit invisible, as many kids her age do. And what power should she develop other than the power of invisibility? Invisibility opens her eyes to the world around her, and she can now observe things that she'd never known before. The rest of the chapters tell the stories—and powers—of her Aunt Natalie, Ruth, Ben, her cousin, Sasha, her uncle, Peter and her cousin, Alek.

What the Family Needed is a thought-provoking, touching, and all-around satisfying piece of work. Every character is extremely relatable; the challenges that they face in their lives are realistic and relatable. Amsterdam cleverly weaves in little bits of wisdom into every chapter and situation, making each chapter a learning experience for the reader. As I followed the characters' stories, I couldn't help but gain some kind of insight into my own life, as well. This novel takes a classic concept, puts a creative twist on it, and makes profound statements about love, trust and, of course, family ties. ■



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SAY Coalition Coordinator
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*The pledge was developed for students and parents by SAY Student Leadership Council and is available at www.e-say.org

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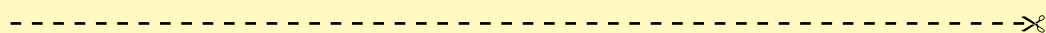
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Name _____

Date _____

Name of person(s) to whom I'm handing my signed pledge _____

Triple Points addresses different perspectives on one topic: from a parent, a teen and a professional.

Domestic Violence Painful Stories

Parent 1

By Leslie Morgan Steiner

I was 22. I had just graduated from Harvard College with a degree in English. That summer, I moved to New York City for my dream job at *Seventeen Magazine*.

I had no idea that my life would be derailed by a carefully laid physical, financial and psychological trap disguised as love.

Crazy love.

My new boyfriend, also an Ivy League graduate and Wall Street investment banker, worshipped me. I felt like I was in love for the first time. No one had made me feel so deeply understood and championed as a woman, a writer and a potential mother. This is what Shakespeare and Judy Blume had been talking about—you simply know when you meet your soul mate. I agreed, with starry eyes, when Conor asked me to marry him and trade New York City for a more peaceful life together in a small New England village.

Despite my education, and the fact that my job required me to be an expert on teenage girls, I didn't know that American women, ages 16-24, are three times as likely to be victims of relationship violence as women of other ages. Or, that every year, 500 women and girls of this age are killed by boyfriends and husbands. I didn't know that relation-

ship violence victims and their partners are highly skilled at camouflaging the abuse from family, friends and co-workers—the people who can help them the most.

Conor didn't hit me on our first date. In fact, we were in an intimate, trusting relationship for nearly two years before he first struck me. Sure, there were red flags: his troubled relationship with his mother, the physical abuse he'd suffered as a child from his stepfather and the deep paranoia that no one loved him enough to stand by him through thick and thin.

Yet, our love could overcome these, I was sure.

Five days before our wedding, he suddenly grabbed my throat after I became frustrated by a malfunctioning computer. Over the next few days, I agonized about whether I should still marry Conor. The bruises on my neck had barely faded when I put on my mother's wedding dress. I told myself over and over that the love of my life would never hit me again, that he was nervous about the wedding, that he was very, very sorry.

I was wrong.

He beat me twice more on our honeymoon. Back at home, my new husband poured coffee

CONTRIBUTORS

Parent's Point



LESLIE MORGAN STEINER

Teen's Point



SUAMHIRS RIVERA

Professional



PANDORA MACLEAN-HOOVER

5 WAYS TO HELP

1. Tell your friend, colleague or relative that you are worried about his or her safety. Many victims of domestic abuse aren't able to recognize that what is happening to them isn't "normal"—or that it's not his or her fault—and that they do not need to remain in the relationship.

2. Recognize that your friend (or colleague or relative) is in a dangerous situation. Talk to him or her about the help that is available, and help develop a safety plan.

3. Find a local domestic violence organization that can offer counseling and/or support. Offer to go along for moral support (including if he or she has to go to the police, court, a lawyer's office, etc.).

4. Be supportive and non-judgmental. When your friend, colleague or relative wants to talk, listen. But don't judge their decisions. Many victims of abuse stay in their relationships; others leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize.

5. Recognize you cannot "rescue" your friend, colleague or relative. Ultimately, the victim must be the one to get out of the relationship. Your role is to offer him or her support (emotional and otherwise) in this journey.

Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline

grounds on my head, pushed me down the stairs and held a loaded gun to my head. Still, I insisted to myself: I was a strong woman in love with a troubled man. It couldn't possibly be that I, with my loving family, Harvard degree, and promising career, was a battered wife.

Although I didn't know this then, my Romeo-and-Juliet tale encompassed all the typical, predictable stages of abuse. First, the romantic seduction phase. Then, isolation from family and friends. Finally, the first violent attack, right around the time of a commitment—marriage, moving in together or getting pregnant—when it's far harder for the victim to leave. What followed was the steady, even boring, drip-drip-drip of fear, emotional destruc-

tion and physical assaults.

It took four years of abuse, two kind and gentle friends who intervened and help from dozens of neighbors, friends, colleagues, a wise therapist, a helpful locksmith, three police officers and one very astute lawyer before I was able to leave my abusive husband for good. I started my life over at 27. I was physically and emotionally battered and far poorer financially, but richer in wisdom about the difference between true love and crazy love.

Today, awareness of domestic violence is greater than when I was a 22-year-old victim. Many women and girls in the key risk group, 16 to 24, know that relationship violence is wrong. And, after 20 years of federal funding from the 1994 Violence Against Women Act and the establish-

ment of the National Domestic Violence Hotline (www.ndvh.org), multiple resources are available to victims and their families.

However, few parents know how to protect their sons and daughters from relationship abuse. My parents certainly didn't; although I hid the abuse from them while it was ongoing, they suffered a terrible feeling of helplessness because they knew something was crooked in my life, but they had no toolkit for how to intervene.

I have simple advice for all parents: talk to your kids about relationship abuse. The One Love Foundation (www.joinonelove.org) has a short, haunting, 60-second video about relationship abuse and a 20-question Danger Assessment survey available via smartphone apps. The next time you and your kids hear a Chris Brown or Rihanna song on the radio, tell them why you think relationship violence is destructive.

Tell your sons and daughters that you will always be there to help them. That is how I recovered from domestic violence—through family and friends, and even a few wonderful strangers, who believed I was strong enough to leave, and never condemned me for my mistakes. Instead, they helped me find a future free from abuse.

Leslie Morgan Steiner is the author of the New York Times bestselling memoir about relationship abuse, Crazy Love, and the author of a TEDTalk on why victims stay in abusive relationships. Visit her website at www.lesliemorgansteiner.com

Teen

By Suamhirs Rivera

I was born in Honduras and raised by an abusive father. His

abuse left me with 57 scars. He left when I was nine years old. The last time I saw him, he tried to cut my eye out.

My father left my mom in a wheelchair after he kicked her and broke two of the bones in her back. So, when he left, I had to become the man of the house to support my mom and my brothers. I was nine years old—just a child.

I did whatever I had to do. I cleaned out trash and helped people with their gardens. At 14, I started working on a farm. When I turned 16, I decided I would have a better future and be better able to help my family if I went to the U.S. So, I contacted my godmother who lived there.

With \$60, I took trains to the U.S. and crossed the border in Texas. My godmother picked me up at a gas station. Within 20 minutes of being at her house, I remember something wet being put over my mouth and that was it. I woke up in room, and she came in and told me what I had to do: let anyone who came through the door do whatever they wanted to do to me. I was not allowed to leave the room, unless they were transporting me to another city.

In the next six months, my godmother transported me to 27 cities throughout the U.S., including Panama City, Las Vegas, Chicago, Seattle and many others. During that time, I was always on cocaine and Viagra, so I'd remain sexually active for people. I had to give into it because my godmother knew where my mother and brother were, and I didn't want anything bad to happen to them.

Finally, a neighbor called the police because so many people were coming in and out of the house. Then the FBI got involved, because it was commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking of myself and two other girls. I was scared because prostitution is against the law, and I thought I was a criminal.

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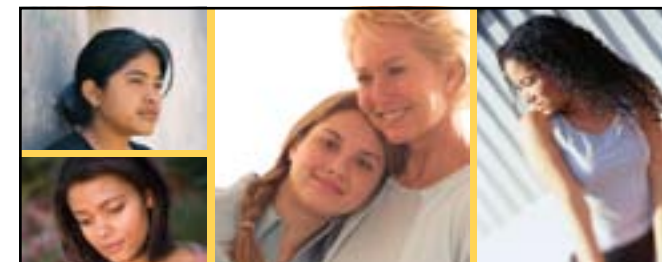
Crisis Chat online
at www.adamhsc.org

If you are thinking about suicide, tell someone and get help immediately. If you suspect that a friend or family member is thinking about suicide, call **Cuyahoga County's 24-Hour Suicide Prevention Hotline: 216-623-6888** or Crisis Chat online at www.adamhsc.org



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Start the Conversation

We applaud the courage of domestic violence survivors who are willing and able to share their experiences in a public forum. It takes courage to disclose that you are a victim of domestic violence.

There are many factors that can make it difficult, if not impossible, for survivors of domestic violence to talk about the violence done to them. They include:

Fear of reprisal. A survivor might believe—often with good reason—that her life, or that of her children, other family members or close friends, may be in danger if she talks about the violence.

Desire to protect loved ones. No one enjoys seeing her family's "dirty laundry" aired. A survivor may want to protect her family and friends from bad news, gossip and judgment by keeping quiet.

Guilt. A survivor may assume all the blame for the abuse, and even after she takes the steps to leave an abusive relationship, may still feel that she is somehow at fault for "causing" the violence.

Being judged as weak or stupid. Our society clearly judges women who are survivors of domestic violence. Even while we deplore the violence, we judge its victims, often harshly: "Why did she stay so long?" "Why did she go back after the first time?" "Why didn't she fight back or get help?" We know that this judgment exists because we read them and say them every time a domestic violence case makes the news or gossip columns. Remember Rhianna and Chris?

Feeling lonely, inadequate, unsupported. Too many survivors hear non-understanding and non-supportive responses when they share their experiences. Even well-meaning comments like, "I knew he was bad news from the beginning" can be hurtful and triggering for a survivor.

For these reasons, counselors and advocates are very cautious when advising a survivor about the possible consequences of speaking out about the abuse.

So, when a survivor bravely discloses to you about the abuse, what can you say that will be supportive, sensitive and non-judgmental? If you are comfortable listening to the survivor, let her know that you're willing to listen if she'd like to talk. But, please don't offer to listen if you don't think you can handle it. It's more supportive to listen than talk. Remember, it's not your job to fix things.

And when you do talk, refrain from statements that contain a "should." As in, "You should..." or "I think you should..." Or even its sneaky cousin, "You ought to..." It's more helpful to use supportive and empowering language, like "One of the things that might be helpful is..." or "There are several options you have for..."

And if you're at a loss for words, remember that it's never wrong to just say, "I'm so sorry."

Katie Feifer is Research Director of The Voices and Faces Project, a national documentary and creative initiative created to give voice and face to survivors of sexual violence and trafficking.

I was afraid of going to jail.

I was kept in the U.S. as a material witness to my godmother's trial. She was put in jail for two years and then deported to Honduras. I was placed in foster care and moved from one very hard situation to another. Foster care is not set up to provide services to an immigrant youth, especially one who had been a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. I didn't speak English, I didn't have a Social Security number or green card. It was very, very hard. I had no support. I was given many mental health diagnoses, and in my first three months in foster care, I was put on 13 different psychotropic medications. I was drugged, literally.

Then one day in 2008, this guy showed up and said, "I'm going to be there for you." He was my court-appointed special advocate (CASA). I didn't believe him, but he kept showing up and kept showing up. I stopped taking medication because he gave me the support I needed. He taught me English. He took me out of my group home and taught me what it meant to live in America and how to become a productive member of society. He helped me make decisions about my education. I got a GED. He helped me apply to college and for scholarships.

Today, I am a part-time student at the University of California at San Diego, one of the most prestigious schools in the country. I am majoring in political science and international relations. It has been wonderful. But, if it weren't for the support of my CASA, I would not be here. It took traveling more than 5,500 miles from Honduras, being a victim of childhood sex trafficking and being placed in foster care to find the perfect father figure—the perfect individual who came along and changed everything for me.

As told to Your Teen by Suamhirs Rivera, a 20-year-old college student at the University of California at San Diego.

Professional

By Pandora MacLean-Hoover

I wish my father were here to face the music: to be held accountable for his rage-filled outbursts and stripped of the three belts he always had ready to unleash on me. As an adult, I also recognized my mother's culpability in provoking his tirades and not protecting her children.

The Beatles released their hit song "Help!" in 1965. "Help me if you can. I'm feeling down... Won't you please, please help me!" That same year, my parents signed a permission slip, allowing me to participate in a student teacher's research project, "The Effects of Home Life on School Performance." Two big reels of a mustard-colored tape recorder turned slowly as I told the young woman everything. I walked home that afternoon, certain the cavalry would descend upon my house at 301 Pleasant Street (ironic) and make the madness go away.

No one ever came.

I no longer see myself as a victim; I do see how my survivorship inspires others. As a clinical social worker and psychotherapist, I work to provide a trusting, safe environment for children and adults undergoing traumatic situations, like domestic violence.

Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional or a combination of all three. Violence, experienced once or more than once, teaches victims to live in a state of fear, stress and terror. The unpredictability of "a next time" looms large as victims wait and watch.

Children, teens and adults may look fine to the outside world, while experiencing terrible pain on the inside. Abusers pressure victims to keep the family secrets, and oftentimes, silence makes more sense than reporting. Threats of reprisal, reinforced by follow-through, ren-

der victims reluctant to report. Many times, it is unsafe to talk about abuse. Feelings of shame, self blame, worthlessness and powerlessness complicate the choice for victims to speak out.

Affluent communities, previously sheltered by a myth of exception, have stepped up in the last two decades with domestic violence programs to expose that they aren't exempt. Higher edu-

cation is also no shield to abuse. Book smarts have precious little to do with people's inability to manage stress.

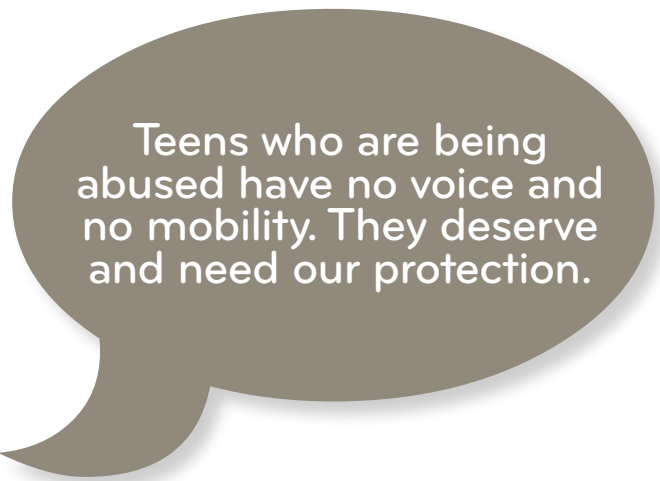
It is unchecked stress that can lead to an abusive cycle: tension building and tension peaking with violence, followed by abuser remorse. The pattern is complicated and confusing, especially to children. Children and teens develop healthy minds in environments of safety, stability and predictability. Abusive homes are rampant with chaos and uncertainty.

Bruises and broken bones may be hard evidence of abuse. While deniable, they usually garner the attention of authorities. Soft symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, sleep disturbance, bedwetting, anger, distractibil-

ity, absence from school, etc.) are more subtle signs of abuse. However, they are "red flags" when chronic.

Many teens try to solve their own problems or be their friend's protector; however, those suffering from abuse need a team of support. Teens who are being abused have no voice and no mobility. They deserve and need our protection. Abusers also deserve and need psychological help. Sadly, many are former victims of abuse themselves.

While I love the message of peace in the Beatles' song, "Let it Be," please don't. There are many ways to heal, but safety must first be established before recovery can begin. It is not okay to hurt or be hurt. Tell someone. ■



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ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

When Sports Go Wrong

BY DIANA SIMEON | PHOTOS BY BETH SEGAL

When Madeline was living with her family in Texas a couple of years ago, she joined her middle school's track team. She was new to the sport, but she was fast. She worked hard. She won medals.

Then one day, Madeline fell while taking a hurdle. She cracked a bone in her wrist. Her track season was over.

Her coaches were upset, but probably not in the way you'd expect. Rather than consoling their promising athlete, or encouraging her to return next season, they turned their back on her.

"They shunned me for the rest of the year," recalls Madeline, who has since moved to the East Coast. "I guess because I would no longer be winning them any medals."

Every year, millions of teenagers in the United States participate in team sports. In fact, the Gallup research shows that more than 50 percent of teenagers are on a school athletic team.

But, what about the remaining 50 percent? Certainly, plenty of

those teenagers are happily involved in other extracurricular activities. After all, not everyone is athletically inclined. Still, there's a sad story here, too, because there's a significant number of teenagers who, like Madeline, once enjoyed sports, but no longer participate. These teenagers say it's just not worth it.

"Sports lost their appeal for me," says Madeline, who adds that her coaches also verbally abused the team at practices. "I did end up trying out for the track team last year, but I actually found myself overwhelmed with memories and emotions from my experience the previous year and ended up dropping out."

Talk to coaches, parents and teenagers about the downside of sports, and you'll hear the same answer:

by middle school and certainly by high school, it has more often than not become a game of medals. Not the plain old fun of playing. Not the fringe benefits that sports offer. But winning. Period.

No surprise, then, that so many teenagers are opting out.

This issue, *Your Teen* takes an up-close look at sports: why our teenagers should play, how we can avoid getting nuts about our teenager's sports performance, what to look for in a coach and, most important of all, how to keep sports positive (heck, even fun).

THE UPSIDE OF SPORTS

Here's what parents should understand about team sports: they greatly

We take our kid's performance as a reflection on us, so if our teen scores a goal or gets the run or whatever, we can stick our chest out a little further and feel a little better about ourselves.

benefit the participants, regardless of their talent or the team's record.

Obviously, fitness is a perk. In a nation struggling with weight, a daily dose of exercise goes a long way. But, equally important are the non-athletic skills that sports build.

"There is an awful lot you can learn in sports that you will use the rest of your life," explains John Duffy, a Chicago-area psychologist and author of *The Available Parent*. "You learn to play on a team. You learn to handle challenges. You learn to deal with adversity. You learn to be gracious when you win and when you lose."

Studies show that athletes also tend to do better in school and have lower dropout rates than their non-athletic peers. What's more, research also shows that sports can serve as an antidote to many risky teen behaviors. A 2011 University of Michigan study found that teenagers who play team sports were less likely to smoke and do drugs. However, it's worth noting that the study also found that they were somewhat more likely to drink frequently.

Time to re-think the after-game party?

Meanwhile, female athletes have additional advantages. The Women's Sports Foundation reports that girls who play sports are half as likely to become pregnant (because they are more likely to abstain or use contraceptives) and also more likely to

have a positive view of their bodies (though this is not the case in sports where a particular physique is prized, like gymnastics, dance and figure-skating).

WHAT GOES WRONG

So with all the benefits, why do so many teenagers stop playing team sports by high school? According to a study by the National Alliance for Sports, more than 70 percent of adolescents drop out of their sport by middle school. Some may take a break, some may switch to another sport, but many abandon sports altogether. And, the number one reason that adolescents stop? The sport isn't fun anymore.

"There are two things that can happen, in my opinion," explains Bill Morton, a longtime coach in the Raleigh-Durham area and dad of three boys (including two teenagers) who play baseball. "When you get older, it gets competitive. Some of the kids take it very seriously, but some are out there just to have fun, so that kid who just has a love of the game can get turned off by the intensity. The other thing is that a kid might realize they can't compete at the level they need to. And, they are not ready to dedicate themselves to one single sport, and unfortunately that's what kids are expected to do now."

Needless to say, when sports get serious and winning becomes the primary goal, which tends to happen around middle school, it puts tremendous pressure on teenagers—and there's not much

fun in that. For starters, there are the physical demands of rigorous training schedules. More than one expert told *Your Teen* that sports-related injuries are on the rise in teenagers, in large part because so many young athletes now play just one sport year-round.

The emotional pressure is also particularly tough for teenagers to handle. This can come from coaches, who too often care more about scoring than their athletes' overall well-being, and from parents, who fixate on their teenager's—and team's—performance.

"Especially in the teenage years, when it's all about being the best and winning, it's so much pressure," notes Frank Sileo, a psychologist in Ridgewood, New Jersey and author of *Sally Sore Loser*. "I understand we all like to win," he adds. "Winning feels good, and losing doesn't feel so good. No one is going to deny that. But, at what point do we lose the focus of what we're doing here?"

That's a question that Jesse, who lives in the Cleveland area, would like answered. The summer before his sophomore year, Jesse decided to play in a regional baseball league—which required a commitment of four full days a week—instead of attending his football team's summer training sessions.

Turns out, that didn't go over so well with the football coaches. "Once football started, the coaches were mad because I hadn't gone to off-season training, even though they said it was

not mandatory," Jesse explains.

As the season progressed, Jesse noticed his coaches were unsupportive, at times even outright discriminatory. For example, while he played in every game, he didn't letter. And his teammates were also hostile. Enough was enough, and Jesse walked away from a sport he'd played for half of his life.

"I decided that I didn't want to make it any worse, so I didn't play football again. I had played eight years worth of football, which at that point was half of my life. I gave it my all. I gave everything I had to it."

Asked why his coaches and teammates may have acted in this way, Jesse says, "It's so competitive, and everyone wants to win. It's getting away from the kids who want to have fun and just going to the kids who want to play no matter what."

STAY IN THE GAME

What should our goal be when it comes to teenagers and sports?

"Yes, it's beneficial for teenagers to be involved in sports," says Gary Malone, a Dallas-area psychiatrist and author of *What's Wrong With My Family?* "But the correct word here is involved."

In other words, says Malone—who swam for top-ranked Southern Methodist University in the 1970s—sports are a part of a teenager's life, alongside academics, friends, family and other claims on a teenager's time, such as working or volunteering.

Here's how to get started (and also check out Teen Speak for how one West Coast teenager has struck a balance between sports and the rest of his life).

Keep perspective. First of all, consider why your teenager plays sports. Enjoyment is reason enough, but if you're counting on glory from your teenager's athletic career, be realistic.

"Only three percent of high school athletes go on to play in college," Malone says. "Less than one percent of college athletes go on to play professional sports."

Meanwhile, your teenager's odds of winning a college athletic scholarship aren't great, either. Few athletes receive one—and even then, it may be only a couple thousand dollars a year or less. (See our Q&A with former NBA player Bob Bigelow.) That said, playing sports can certainly help your teenager gain admission to a competitive college, plus earn her merit aid, but other extracurriculars can do that too. And always remember, academics matter most for gaining admission to college. If your student ranks well below a college's admissions requirements, she won't get in, regardless of

her talent on the playing field. If your student is struggling academically because of time devoted to sports, he may be damaging his college prospects. It's time to reassess.

It's not about you. When our teenagers excel, we can't help but feel proud. But, too much investment in our teenagers' sports performance is a red flag.

"If it means that much to you, if you get a narcissistic tweak if your teenager won an event, you need to do a little introspection," Malone advises. "Ask yourself why it's so important that your teenager hits the home run in the big game."

What is important here, say the experts, is that your teenager owns his or her sport's experience. In other words, it's not about you (and it's especially not about your

past sports glories or failures).

"Parental ego has a lot to do with the problem," Duffy says. "We take our kid's performance as a reflection on us, so if our teen scores a goal or gets the run or whatever, we can stick out our chest a little further and feel a little better about ourselves. And our teen is kind of secondary a lot of the time."

Don't be "that" parent. One way to make sports about our teenagers is to be conscious of how we act at events and—equally important—during the car ride home. Indeed, if you talk to teenagers about parents' behavior on the sidelines, you'll get an earful.

"It's definitely not helpful," Jesse says. "It's annoying, and when it gets to that point, it isn't fun anymore. When the parents are screaming and angry, it's not

fun, and you don't want to play."

Duffy has heard similar feedback from his own son, who plays water polo. "The other day, there was an intense game," Duffy recalls. "My son told me the worst part of the game was the parents screaming in the stands. It's really distracting and takes his mind out of the game. He even found it embarrassing."

A recent survey by Tampa Bay's i9 Sports of athletes, age eight to 14, found that more than 30 percent of respondents wished "adults weren't watching their games." Meanwhile, more than 10 percent said they'd been called a name by another player's parent; almost 40 percent said they'd witnessed verbal fights between parents.

How should parents behave during a game? Jim Thompson, Executive Director of the na-

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tional organization, Positive Coaching Alliance, recommends “no-direction” cheering during events. “We think parents should cheer, but it should be positive. Let the coach coach. Let the players play,” Thompson says. “You can say, ‘Hey, good kick.’ But you shouldn’t say, ‘Hey, kick it to Julie.’”

Not only is it distracting, but spectators also have no idea what play the team is executing. Kicking it to Julie may seem obvious to you, but the team or your player may be trying a different strategy.

Morton goes so far as to hold meetings with parents before big games. “I’m coaching a U13 travel team. The Friday night before our last game, I held a parent meeting. I said, ‘I want you to be the biggest cheerleaders. I don’t want to hear anyone yelling at the umpires or saying negative

things to the kids. I want my parents to be the fan base, not the hot head in the stands that no one wants to stand near.”

Additionally, Thompson says, avoid the “dreaded post-game analysis.” Rather than drilling your teen on what he or she did wrong, ask open-ended questions. “How did you feel about the game?” “What did you like best?” “Get them to talk.” Again, let your teenager own the experience.

Value positive coaching. A good coach can change lives. A bad coach will make your teenager miserable and, worse, miss out on all the valuable life lessons sports can offer. Just ask Leslie A., whose son dropped out of basketball because of his high school coach.

“To have him come to us and tell us that he had made a decision to quit the school’s var-

sity basketball team made me incredibly sad,” says the San Antonio-based mom, who asked her last name not be used so that her son wasn’t “black-balled” from his current team. “I think too many school coaches lose sight of why they are there. They are hired not only to develop our children’s physical skills, but to grow leaders, teach sportsmanship, team work, etc. So many coaches don’t get it, and our kids pay for it.”

The bottom line: parents must insist on a positive coaching model for their teenagers and push schools to hire coaches accordingly.

What is positive coaching? Well, no surprise, Positive Coaching’s Thompson has a lot to offer here. It’s about coaching for mastery (not just winning) and for filling emotional tanks—“if you are draining the emotion-

al tank by yelling and criticizing all the time, players don’t do well,” he notes.

It’s also about showing respect for the game (and your opponents). “If you are a coach who wins a lot of games and even wins the championship, but your players don’t want to play for you anymore, so they drop out, then you are a failure as a coach, no matter how many games you win,” he adds.

Morton, who played baseball through college, couldn’t agree more. “I always stress to any of my teams that we are playing a game, and a game is fun. It’s not life or death. The sun will come up tomorrow, regardless of what happens. Take it seriously. Give me 110 percent. But, it’s a game.” ■

EXPERT ADVICE

Bob Bigelow

Who better to talk about the competitive world of sports than a former professional athlete? This issue, *Your Teen* caught up with Bob Bigelow, who, after playing for the University of Pennsylvania, was a first-round draft pick in the NBA. He went on to play for the Kansas City Kings, the Boston Celtics and the San Diego Clippers. Today, he speaks to audiences across the country and is the author of *Just Let the Kids Play*. Bigelow told *Your Teen* that it’s time for adults to slow down.

Do you see a problem with adolescents and sports?

A Michigan State study showed that 10 years old is the greatest point of sports participation in this country. Three years later, 70 percent are gone. That is the sobering reality of what happens between fifth and eighth grade.

Why do you think that happens?

The youth sports system is too competitive. This is where I’ve been trying to slam on the breaks, but with mixed results. We need middle school coaches who will play kids, even at the risk of losing games. They should also do this at the freshman and JV levels at high school. Developing players—not winning—should be the priority. This sometimes falls on deaf ears.

How did we get here?

These days, kids can join a youth sports programs in kindergarten, so by late elementary and definitely by middle school, they’ve been playing the sport for six

or seven years. And adults, who may have begun with the best intentions, now want to win. So, we increase the playing time of our “best” players and decrease the playing time of our “worst” players. But, what adults don’t understand is that kids are still developing in middle and high school. Making decisions about athletic ability at such an early age eliminates your late bloomers, and there are a whole lot of late bloomers out there. An organization that evaluates the talents of young players leaves kids behind. Adults need to slow down in a system that has sped up.

So, athletic ability is not always obvious by middle school?

Not at all. Child development and physical education studies show that athletic ability prior to puberty is a meaningless indicator of athletic ability post puberty. Your average 10-year-old is 4-foot-9 and 80 pounds. I don’t care if that boy or girl has played



3,000 soccer games; he or she is still 4-foot-9 and 80 pounds. You cannot tell how good a soccer player he or she will be at 16, 17 or 18 years old. But, we cull the wheat from the chaff way too early and get rid of all those kids who aren’t yet the “star” soccer or basketball or whatever players. The whole system is run amuck.

So is there a better solution?

Don’t let an adult near the kids until they are about 12 years old. That’s pretty close to the system I grew up with. There were no organized sports until middle school.

I started playing basketball in ninth grade, and I was a first round draft pick in the NBA seven years later. People think that is unbelievable, but I didn’t have any basketball offered in my town until ninth grade.

Why have we gotten so competitive? Is it about scholarships?

Yes, the myth of the abundant athletic scholarships. But, let’s

look at the statistics. The NCAA is about 1,100 schools: 350 are Division 1 and 200-250 are Division 2. Division 1 and 2 are allowed to give a certain number of scholarships for athletics each year; Division 3 is not. But, many of these schools then divide these scholarships among many kids. A few years ago, *The New York Times* interviewed the Villanova baseball coach, who had 25 kids on his team. He had four scholarships to offer, which he split between 15 kids. So, all these parents think, ‘Oh, my kid is going to play baseball at Villanova.’ And the coach says, ‘Well, we can offer you enough money for books.’

So there isn’t much money at all?

There are 7.5-8 million high school athletes in this country. There are approximately 450,000 college athletes, which includes more than NCAA schools. About 3-5 percent of those college athletes are foreign born. So, do the math. Winnow 8 million down to 450,000 and

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factor that only about 10 percent of them get scholarships. My wife is the longtime women's swimming coach at Tufts University, a Division 3 school. She's got 40 kids on her team. They are all college athletes, but none of them has a swimming scholarship, believe me.

It's sad because if you look at the research, playing sports does a lot of good for teenagers.

Yes, generally that's the case, and there are a lot of good people out

there trying to do it right. The problem is the competitive desire of adults who drive toward younger and younger age groups.

Is that why so many teenagers now specialize in one sport year-round?

Yes, specialization is another problem. My rule of thumb is this: if by junior year of high school, you want to take a shot at playing the sport past high school, then specialize. Before that, it's useless. Absolutely useless. Too many parents of kids

are caught up in specialization. It's not good.

Why?

There is a well-known scientific model in sports called periodization, which basically means you take time off. This is what pro athletes do—get away from the sport for a period of time. You shouldn't play a sport year-round, but we are doing this with our adolescents, and we wonder why their knees give out. At the younger levels, variety is

the spice of life. Playing multiple sports means using different muscles and experiencing different coaches and different ways of doing things. It's a real disservice to take that away. As I tell people all the time, in school, we get reading, writing, arithmetic and science. No one says we're going to do only math this year. People understand a well-rounded education, but they don't understand well-rounded athletics.

How should parents navigate the system?

Here is a simple one: it is their life, not yours. Whatever activities your teenager would like to do, they should do. If he or she wants to play soccer, but you don't like soccer, that's not a reason to keep your kid out. If you were the high school football star, that is not a reason to push your kid into football. Also, learn about the sport your teenager wants to play. You don't have to become an expert, but know a little bit about it. And when you are on the sidelines at the game, don't ever bark out directions. Don't ever yell at a referee. It's not your game. You are a guest at your child's game.

Say my freshman wants to play a particular sport at the high school. How do I encourage her, knowing so many other students have been playing for years?

It's difficult. You hope there is a freshman team. But, some high schools in this country have 2,000 or 3,000 kids, and there may be only 30 to 40 spots available in a particular sport. It's tough to walk in and earn a spot on that team in those schools. However, some high schools have gotten creative and are offering more and different kinds of sports, like rowing, bowling or even bass fishing. It's great, and it's an opportunity for kids to be on a team. ■

TEEN SPEAK

Fitting It All In

BY DANIEL MCGANN

Balancing life with time spent in practice, at games and traveling to and from events and competitions isn't easy for a teenage athlete. But, because I want to be a well-rounded person and not just a great athlete, here's how I ensure that my entire life doesn't revolve around my football and basketball games:

I hang out with friends as often as a can. While I've made good friends in sports and at school, most of my friends are from my neighborhood, and we all go to different schools and have different interests. When I hang out with them, we talk about things besides

sports and schoolwork. My time with them is relaxing and fun, and we don't have any pressure, like trying to win the next tournament. We'll order a pizza and eat it in my neighbor's rec room.

I watch some TV or play a video game. After school, on days I don't have practice, I'll spend 30 minutes to an hour watching TV or playing a video game. I think this clears my mind and allows me to concentrate later on homework. I like to use some of my free time just for myself, and I just need this time alone to think through things.

I focus on making good grades. I do my homework and study for

tests. When I have a few hours between the end of school and practice, I can't just goof around. I want to be admitted into the honors and advanced placement classes at my school, so this sometimes requires studying when I would rather be sleeping or doing something more fun than conjugating French verbs.

I don't take sports too seriously. Sure, I want to win, and I want to be a great athlete. But, I don't beat myself up when I don't have a good game. If we lose, I try to shake it off and tell myself we'll try harder next time. Playing sports is supposed to be fun, and I don't want to forget that under the pressure of being the best. I think when my team tries to enjoy the game and focuses on playing as a team, we do better than when we worry about our individual performance.

I listen to my parents (most of the time). They encourage me to do well and motivate me to try harder. When I mess up, they are not too hard on me, but they do talk a lot about what makes for a successful life. My dad tells me to honor my commitments, be on time and always try to make friends. My mom tells me if I learn to write well, I can excel at whatever career I choose. They both tell me that kindness and consideration are among the most important life skills.

Yes, I may dream about being a college and professional athlete, but I also know that if that doesn't happen, I can still have a happy and rewarding life. ■


Daniel McGann, a freshman at Loyola High School in Los Angeles, plays football and basketball for the Loyola Cubs and basketball for the Fastbreak travel team.



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SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA

The Legal High Available at a Store Near You

We all know a teenager like Chase Burnett: a 16-year-old from Peachtree City, Georgia; an honor-role student and athlete with a wide circle of friends; and a young man who loved to wear bow ties on special occasions.

Chase was also a teenager who occasionally experimented with drugs—just like so many teenagers in the United States—until the day in March 2012 when he smoked synthetic marijuana and died.

“Our son’s autopsy report shows that a chemical in the synthetic marijuana shut his lungs down,” says David Burnett, Chase’s fa-

ther and co-founder with his wife, Yvette, of the Chase Burnett Center for Education and Awareness. “He asphyxiated.”

That chemical was AM-2201, frequently found in synthetic marijuana. But this wasn’t an illicit drug, which Chase got from who knows where. In fact, synthetic marijuana is perfectly legal in most states and, chances are, it’s available at a convenience store near you.

Chemical Cocktail

Synthetic marijuana, or “fake” pot, is not marijuana at all. Rather, it’s plant material that has been sprayed with chemicals, called cannibimimetics, designed to mimic the effect of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the active ingredient in marijuana.

It’s legal, typically marketed as “herbal incense” or “herbal potpourri” and sold in convenience stores, head shops, cigar stores and on the Internet. It retails for \$3 and up per gram (depending on the brand).

Because synthetic marijuana is labeled as “not for human consumption,” manufacturers are able to skirt oversight by the Food and Drug Administration. That means the chemicals found in these products—popular brands include K2, Spice, Skunk, Blaze and No More Mr. Nice Guy—have never been tested for safety.

But, these chemicals are far from safe. In 2012, alone, more than 5,000 people were treated in emergency rooms after being exposed to synthetic marijuana (that’s double the number treated in 2010). In February, the Centers for Disease Control announced that exposure to synthetic marijuana, in particular the chemical methanone, was responsible for kidney failure in 16 patients between the ages of 15 and 30.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Data, other effects of synthetic marijuana include: a racing heartbeat, high blood pressure, nausea and vomiting, spasms and seizures, intense hallucinations and psychotic episodes and even suicidal and other harmful thoughts and actions.

Experts say that the side effects impact many different systems and are particularly alarming.

“With marijuana, it is really unlikely that you are going to have damage to other organ systems,” explains Dr. Joseph Shrand, medical director at CASTLE, an adolescent treatment center in Brockton, Massachusetts. “Marijuana can make you hungrier, it can interfere with your sleep, but it’s not going to shut down your kidneys or cause seizures. Synthetic marijuana, on the other hand, is truly a dangerous, dangerous drug.”

But It’s Legal?

Over the past several years, an increasing number of teenagers have caught onto synthetic marijuana, perhaps under the mistaken impression that its legal status makes it safe. The relative ease with which it’s acquired is another factor, say experts.

A 2013 study by the Center for Substance Abuse Research at the University of Maryland College Park found that 12 percent of high school students used synthetic marijuana, putting it in the top three substances abused by teenagers (alcohol and “real” marijuana were at one and two, respectively, with 57 percent and 38 percent of respondents reporting they used those substances).

“It has sort of slipped through the cracks and gotten into the mainstream. Then, the use of it went up dramatically when teenagers realized it could get them high,” says Shrand, who also notes that synthetic marijuana is as addictive as other drugs. Indeed, patients have told him they smoked synthetic marijuana up to 20 times a day.

Unfortunately, banning these products has been an uphill battle. A dozen or so states have passed legislation outlawing known forms of synthetic marijuana, but manufacturers simply change the formulations and get them back on the shelves. Last summer, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) announced it would prosecute under the Federal Analogue Act, which says that if a substance produces the same effect as a Schedule I (which includes marijuana) or Schedule II controlled substance, then that substance should also be controlled. But, that’s still pending.

In other words, parents need to add synthetic marijuana to the conversation.

Some of the signs that your teenager may be using synthetic marijuana are similar to those of “real” marijuana: negative changes at school (missing class or declining grades), increased secrecy, use of incense or other kinds of room deodorant, new friends and asking for money more frequently. Drug paraphernalia to look for include foil packets, pipes and/or rolling papers. Signs specific to synthetic marijuana can include a coffee grinder (pulverizing the plant material makes it easier to smoke) and a strong clove smell.

But, it’s just as important to help teenagers understand the chemical dangers of this particular drug, says Burnett. “My son was smoking poison, and he didn’t know it. You really don’t know what you are getting. It is literally Russian roulette with your body.” —D. S.

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ASK THE DOCTOR Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) affects about 14% of high school students and 6% of middle school students. The good news is that IBS is not life threatening, but it can be life altering. This issue, *Your Teen* talked to Dr. Thomas J. Sferra, Chief of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, to get more information.

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)?
IBS is a functional disorder that causes frequent and recurrent abdominal pain. We diagnose IBS by evaluating symptoms because there is no specific laboratory test. Even if we directly examine the colon, there will be no sign of disease.

What are the symptoms of IBS?

- Abdominal discomfort or pain. There can be dull or crampy pain, gassiness and bloating.
- A change in the bowel function, either in frequency or in stool form. Symptoms do improve with passage of stool.
- Symptoms that have been present for a long time (once per week for at least two months).

When do you typically see the onset of IBS?

We start to see a spike in adolescence.

What causes IBS?

The cause is not completely known or understood. People with IBS may have a more sensitive colon that spasms from certain stimuli. Some people with IBS have a lower tolerance for abdominal pain. There is also

evidence that some people develop IBS following an acute intestinal infection from a parasite, virus or bacteria, allergy or trauma.

Can stress cause IBS?

It doesn't cause it, but if you already have IBS, it can act as a trigger and make the symptoms worse.

Are there other triggers?

Many patients with IBS find that certain foods make their symptoms worse. For example, if a patient with IBS also has lactose intolerance, then drinking milk can trigger an increase in symptoms.

What is the treatment?

There are two ways to treat IBS: lifestyle changes and medication. Lifestyle changes include learning how to cope with the symptoms (perhaps with relaxation techniques) and changing to a healthy diet. Once patients identify foods that trigger an episode, they should avoid those foods. And, since stress can worsen symptoms, we encourage people to learn relaxation techniques in high-stress situations.

IBS patients are often prescribed medication. Antidepressants are often used to alter the pain sensation and reduce the level of discomfort. Antispasmodic medication can help alleviate the symptoms in some patients.

Can you treat IBS without medication?

You can learn relaxation techniques to help cope with the symptoms. Additionally, after you have identified the triggers such as stress or a particular type of food, you can eliminate or avoid those triggers. In general, I recommend a healthy low-fat, low-sugar diet (avoiding junk food) for everyone, but especially for people with IBS.

What do you tell teenagers who are limiting their activity because of IBS?

We recognize that teens live active, social lives and IBS can be very limiting. We work with each individual to help offer treatment options (medication and trigger awareness) that enable teens to participate in their specific sports and lifestyle activities.

Is there a cure?

Work with your doctor to find medication



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Judy Splawski, MD



Zili Zhang, MD, PhD

In most cases, life style changes and medication can control the symptoms of IBS.

that helps the symptoms. Also, pay close attention to your triggers and do your best to avoid them.

Is there any prevention?

No.

Can IBS lead to more serious diseases?

IBS does not lead to more serious diseases. It does not create active tissue damage and does not lead to inflammatory bowel diseases, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis. In most cases, life style changes and medication can control the symptoms of IBS.

What are the signs of something more serious than IBS?

- Blood in stool
- Persistent right-sided pain in the upper and lower abdomen
- Weight loss or poor growth
- Fever
- Pain that awakens you at night
- Persistent vomiting
- Diarrhea at night
- Any abnormality on a physical exam

What advice do you have for parents who suspect their teenager might have IBS?

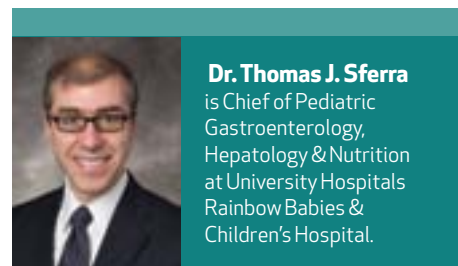
The teenager should be evaluated by a physician comfortable with diagnosing and treating IBS. Once there is a diagnosis, the parents and teenager should try to learn and understand as much as possible



about the disease. Your doctor might order some tests (especially if there are signs of a more serious condition). However, obtaining multiple tests to look for several different diseases is not helpful.

Any last comments?

Yes. Don't worry that IBS leads to anything more serious. IBS is not a disease that creates any damage to vital organs. And in the vast majority of cases, medication and lifestyle changes can control the symptoms. ■



Dr. Thomas J. Sferra
is Chief of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital.

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THE CAMPUS VISIT

Ten Ways to Get the Most from Your Trip

By Randi Mazzella

Visiting colleges with your teenager is an exciting milestone, but the process can be overwhelming and even stressful. And I should know. Over the past 18 months, my teenager and I have toured more than a dozen college campuses. Here are 10 ways to make the most of your campus visits:

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Do research before you visit. With limited time and resources, it's important to investigate prior to arriving on campus. Every college has a website and while not a substitute for a campus visit, it's a good starting point for information.

"There is a wealth of information on college websites," says Sue Davis, Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Youngstown State University. "You can get very specific information, like course descriptions and faculty bios, which can be tremendously helpful."

2. START EARLY

We began making college vis-

its with my daughter in the fall of her junior year. In hindsight, I wish we had started sooner. Between our work schedules and her commitments (academics, sports, activities), we couldn't visit all of the colleges on her list.

Check websites to confirm the days and times of tours and information sessions; some colleges require students to sign up in advance. Finally, many schools allow students to stay overnight in a dorm, lunch with a current student or have an on-campus interview. These opportunities book up quickly, so call well in advance to schedule.

3. GO BEYOND THE TOUR

The tour and information session provide a good overview of a college. But, to really get a feel for a school, you need to take the time to explore the campus. Allow at least half a day per college.

"Try to get a sense of what it's like to make a home on campus. Check out facilities that are important to you—the library, music, sports, dorms," recommends Dr. Michele Hernandez, President of Hernandez College

Counseling and author of *A is for Admission*.

So, go ahead and eat in the dining room, hang out in the student center or work out at the gym. And try to talk to the students you meet along the way. At one school, we got lost trying to find one of the academic buildings, and my daughter asked a student for directions. He wound up walking us there and telling her why he chose the school and what his experience had been like so far.

4. ASK QUESTIONS

Make a list of questions before you leave on your trip. In fact, Kelly Queijo, founder of SmartCollegeVisit.com, suggests asking the same questions on every tour. This helps your teenager make an "apples to apples" comparison of each school, a helpful tool for assessing prospective schools on your return home.

And, don't be afraid to ask tough questions. "Choosing a school is a lot like buying a house. The decision is both emotional and intellectual. On a college visit, try to relax, take it all in and

be honest with yourself about whether it is the right fit for you," advises Eric Furda, Dean of Admissions at the University of Pennsylvania.

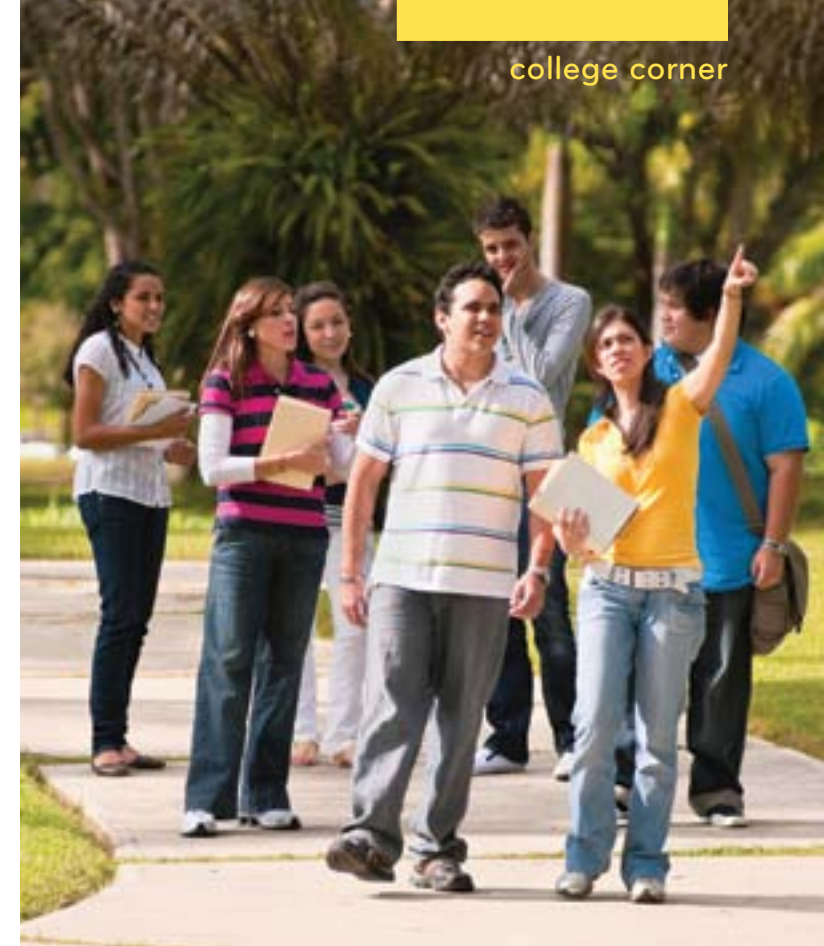
5. TAKE NOTES

Especially when you are visiting multiple schools in a few days, the tours can blend into one another. Take a notebook along so that your teenager can document her thoughts in real time; also, your teen should note the name of the tour guide and any other students or officials she meets on the visit so that she can contact them with follow-up questions.

6. GO TO CLASS

My daughter sat in on classes at several schools and found it very helpful. It gave her a chance to observe the professors and see how the students interacted with the faculty.

Most professors are happy to meet with a prospective student. So, if your teenager is passionate about a particular subject—be it French literature or biomedical engineering—get the names of



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“When you’re here during the weekday, you can see what classes are really like. During the weekends, a lot of students are in their residence halls, so you can’t get a sense of that.”

one or two professors in those departments. Your teenager can either email those faculty members directly to set up a meeting or ask the admissions department. The bottom line: speaking with a professor can give your teenager clues beyond the course catalog about what it’s like to attend the college.

“I would also suggest going on a tour on a weekday instead of on a weekend,” says YSU’s Davis. “When you’re here during the weekday, you can see what classes are really like. During the weekends, a lot of students are in their residence halls, so you can’t get a sense of that.”

7. SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW

These days, many colleges do not require prospective students to have an interview, but that doesn’t mean your teenager shouldn’t sign up for one when offered. An impressive interview can work in your teenager’s favor. These slots are handed out on a first-come, first-served basis—another reason to plan your trip in advance.

8. LOOK BEYOND ACADEMICS

Skim through the bulletin boards in the student center and other buildings. These indicate what kind of clubs, speakers and events are happening on campus and whether there are activities that appeal to your student. Also, find out what is going on outside of campus. At many colleges, the surrounding areas and cities are a big part of the social life at the

college. “Also ask your tour guide. They are typically students who are involved in a lot of activities on campus,” Davis adds.

9. PARENTS, STEP BACK

Throughout the entire college application process, but particularly when visiting campuses, parents should let their teenager take the lead. “Remember this is your student’s journey, not yours,” says Robin Mamlet, the former Dean of Admissions at Swarthmore College and co-author of *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step*. “It is up to parents to help their child make the best choice for himself.”

That means letting your teenager ask (a lot of, if not all) the questions. “Take the back seat,” advises Terri McCue, Director of College Counseling at Hathaway Brown School in Cleveland, Ohio. “You should be at the back of the line, while your child is at the front of the line.”

10. HAVE FUN!

Last, but hardly least, take some time during your trip to have fun with your teen. See a ball game, go sightseeing or eat at a popular local restaurant. Not only will you get a feel for the area around campus, you’ll be spending some soon-to-be-precious moments with your teenager. So, embrace the opportunity. Before you know it, you’ll be leaving your teenager on campus and heading home alone. ■

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HOT TOPICS

Secrets of Happy Families

Bruce Feiler is the author of nine books, including *Walking the Bible* and *The Council of Dads*. Most recently Feiler published *The Secrets of Happy Families*.

What brought you to research the topic of happy families?

I wrote about happy families not because I had one but because I wanted one. Our lives were chaotic and out of control. I wanted to know what happy families do right and learned from them to make my family happier.

Did you take any particular advice from your research?

1. Be mindful about your family. We know that we have to pay attention to our jobs, hobbies and bodies. We work on these things. Yet, we have this idea that our families are just supposed to be. Always work on your family.
2. Talk about your family history. Knowing family history builds confidence. It teaches our kids that they too can push through their own rough times. Talk about the skeletons, and share your own failures with your kids. It will instill in them con-

fidence to surmount their own hurdles. I go out of my way to share with my kids when things go wrong.

3. Try lots of new things. And, if they don’t work, change. As a parent, I thought that I would make three rules, and it would work. It didn’t. Now, I know that trying a bunch of things reduces the pressure of perfection and the impossible expectation that I have to know, in advance, what to do in every situation. That’s impossible.

Your suggestions look like an equal vote for everyone. At some point should the parents have veto power?

I have three responses:

1. In my family there is empowerment, but we, as parents, define the ecosystem—bedtime, thank you notes, chores and lots of other things that the kids wouldn’t choose to do. Parents have a ton of authority.

2. Nothing is top down in the real world anymore—not business or government or even the military. If you are bossing your kids around all the time then you are not preparing them for the world. Parents must give their kids practice and more leeway to make their own decisions, have a voice in the conversation and participate in running the group. That is the world they are going to enter.
3. Family meetings give parents tremendous power. When my kid wants something from me during the week—i.e., “I need this...now”—I respond that I will be happy to talk about that at the Sunday meeting. And because Sunday meetings are an open forum where everybody gets a say, kids realize the value.

Research shows the importance of family dinner, but it doesn’t work with many of our lives. In a ranking of 35 countries, America ranks 33 in having family dinner together. And, research also shows that there are roughly 10 minutes of conversation at any meal. The rest is, “Take your elbows off the table” and “Pass the ketchup.” If you can have family dinner, fantastic. If you can’t, then strive for those 10 minutes of conversation. Have a family breakfast. Meet for an evening

Why did you reference your mission statement this morning?

We had a big incident with many raised voices. So, in the middle

of the blow up, I remembered that in our family, we try to make positive memories. I calmed down and started a game. I took the poem that my daughter was studying and made mistakes on purpose so that she would correct me. Everyone started laughing, and I thought, “Wow, I learned a lesson from my own book.”

What do you think about family dinners?

Research shows the importance of family dinner, but it doesn’t work with many of our lives. In a ranking of 35 countries, America ranks 33 in having family dinner together. And, research also shows that there are roughly 10 minutes of conversation at any meal. The rest is, “Take your elbows off the table” and “Pass the ketchup.” If you can have family dinner, fantastic. If you can’t, then strive for those 10 minutes of conversation. Have a family breakfast. Meet for an evening



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snack. What you talk about is more important than what you eat. So, don't feel guilty if you can't have dinner. Just find 10 golden minutes in your day.

How many ideas have you implemented in your family?

It's interesting because it changes over time. I resist the idea that there are 3-5 things that everyone must do to make a happy family, so I suggested 200 ideas to make it obvious that no one could do them all.

We use the morning checklist. We still have a weekly family meeting. We have a family mission statement—May our first word be adventure and our last word love—that I referenced just this morning. ■

TOP 10 Secrets of Happy Families

- 1. The New Family Dinner: 10 Golden Minutes**
Find 10 minutes in your day (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack-time—whichever works for your family) to engage in meaningful family conversation.
- 2. Share Your Story**
When family members share their stories, both successes and failures, kids learn that people survive challenges.
- 3. Adapt All the Time**
Families need constant adjustments. Learn to be agile and your children will learn to be flexible as well.
- 4. Go Out and Play**
Make sure that you are conscientious about playing together. Plan for it—vacations, games, family hikes. Have fun.
- 5. Face Time is Important**
As kids spend increased time in front of screens, in-person face time becomes even more essential.
- 6. Family Mission Statement**
Have a formal conversation with your family and define what is really important. From your list of priorities, craft a family mission statement.
- 7. Weekly Family Meeting**
Meet once a week to discuss the family, actually discuss how the family is functioning.
- 8. Get Involved in Your Kids' Disputes**
The old philosophy—let them work it out—has proven not to work. Get involved, but don't adjudicate. Have a conversation that starts to develop conflict-resolution skills.
- 9. Let Your Kids Pick Their Punishments**
They will probably have better follow-through, and they will develop skills to make good decisions.
- 10. Change Where You Sit**
Where you sit will affect the conversation. Hard surface translates to more rigidity; cushioned surfaces create more accommodation.

Like, She Was, Like...

Is "Like" Driving You Crazy?

By Katy Fishman

"And so she was like, it's, like, not really, like, a big deal? And I was like, but you don't, like, even know what you're talking about, so, like? You know?"

If this sounds familiar, don't worry: you're not alone. For better or worse, the word "like" is a part of the teenage vernacular, staging a takeover of a kid's vocabulary on the eve of their thirteenth birthday. Of course, today's teens might not be so inclined toward using it if they knew "like" was a throw-back to 1980s valley-speak, a dialect of California English spoken by Valley Girls and popularized in Frank Zappa's song, "Valley Girl".

"This isn't a new phenomenon," says Tori Cordiano, a consulting psychologist at the Center for Research on Girls at Laurel School in Shaker Heights, Ohio. "Teens tend to be more dramatic in their speech than adults, and they often use 'like' to signal emotion ('I, like, lost it when I saw my grade'). They can also use it in place of the grammatically correct word ('He was like, I'll call you' versus 'He said, I'll

call you'), and they may do this more than most adults."

That said, "like" does have two grammatically correct uses: similarity ("That shirt looks like mine!") or enjoyment ("I like this soup!"). It can also, less correctly, be used to approximate ("It was like six feet wide.") or as a quotative, a word that can serve as spoken quotation marks. But, these uses aren't the real crux of this issue. It's sentences that, like, sound, like, this, with, like, every other word, like, being like. What's that, like, even about?

According to John Ayto, editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*, "like," and its counterpart, "you know," are filler words.

"We all use fillers because we can't keep up highly-monitored, highly-grammatical language all the time," Ayto says. "We all have to pause and think. We've always used words to plug gaps or make sentences run smoothly."



Cordiano agrees: "A big reason why teens, and people in general, use the word, 'like,' is to fill space while speaking. Adults do this too, although adults may be more likely to use other filler words, such as 'umm' or 'ahh.'"

For some parents, the verbal tic is simply too annoying to stand. "My oldest daughter used to say, 'like,' all the time," says Karen Vargas, whose two teenage sons have never picked up the habit. "It drove us all completely crazy! Sometimes it was hard to even have a conversation with her."

Others worry that it will make their teenager appear unprofessional in job or academic interviews, but Cordiano says they shouldn't worry too much. "For most teenagers, this isn't something that parents need to be too concerned about, although many parents describe it as annoying. Similar to slang used by previous generations during the teen years, most of today's teens tend to decrease their overuse of this word, especially in professional situations, as they mature."

If it's a concern for you, there are ways around it. Cordiano

says, "Parents can do a little bit of coaching to decrease its use or to use it correctly. Help your teens to become more aware of their use of the word and teach them to replace the filler word with a pause or a breath."

Another strategy for increasing awareness is to simply keep count of the number of "likes" your teen utters in a day—they may be surprised at the total. Advise them to pause when they feel a "like" coming on, rather than uttering the word; pausing will make them sound more authoritative than any filler will. And, encourage them to broaden and strengthen their vocabulary. The more words they have at their disposal, the easier they can express a thought and rely less on fillers.

With all that said, don't, like, mind it too much. Obnoxious though it can be, most teens do grow out of their "like" phase. And, besides, the word serves the noble purpose of giving teens time to consider what they're saying before they say it. After all, isn't that, like, what we want? ■

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My Daughter Ran Away

By Jackie McManus

When my daughter was eight years old, she wrapped her arms around me and whispered, “I think I’m going to have a good future.”

Six years later, at 14, everything changed. I began dating someone seriously, and my daughter felt neglected. “Spend time with me,” she begged. “Come with me,” I begged back. “I want both of you in my life.” I thought she would adjust.

Instead, she ran away. I never dreamed my daughter would join the ranks of the nearly one million teenagers who run away each year in America. Yet, her rebellious behavior was the catalyst that changed me as a mother and deepened me as a person.

She was gone one week. Thankfully, her older brother found her and brought her home. But home she did not stay. She thought my rules were too restrictive and looking back, they probably were. Intent on having freedom, she would remove the screen from her bedroom window and climb out or leave by the front door.

I would not see her or hear from her for days. I would notify the police and wait, or I would call her friends, drive to their homes, walk in unannounced, get her and bring her home. I took no time for pleasantries. I was in rescue mode, survival mode, dear-God-help-

me mode. I talked to her school counselor, who informed me she hung out with the most “dangerous characters” in our small community. It was no respite when she was home; her language in front of her seven-year-old brother adversely affected him emotionally.

This cycle went on for months, but it seemed like years. Then, I heard about wilderness therapy programs from our family counselor, a counselor who witnessed my daughter walk out of most of our sessions. As a teacher, I liked that the programs offered an educational component. As an avid hiker, I liked that students lived in a remote outdoor setting, requiring them to live naturally and hike great distances. I liked that they offered therapy and a week when I could go to stay with her.

I also liked that she would be gone, though I’m ashamed to say it. She was gone 46 days. When she arrived home, there was little change in our relationship. She kept busy skipping classes, and I kept busy trying to keep her in school. Most of the time, I didn’t know where she was.

After five months, I gave her a choice: attend family counseling with me or go live with her father. She chose the latter and rarely spoke to me over that next year.

But if we fast-forward two years, to today, I can see what we gained from the wilder-

ness therapy program. First, she survived. But next, it took her out of the community in which she was drowning. Grief was our teacher, and we both put one foot in front of the other—she in the desert and me at home. We fought the good fight the best we knew how.

Now when talking about that time, she says, “I’m sorry. I was selfish. I know you need someone in your life.” But, I respond with, “I am so sorry. We are not perfect, but I choose this family. I choose you.”

Today, she lives with her father. I see her nearly every weekend. She is looking for a job and signing up for college classes. Her school counselor tells me she is one of the most articulate, intelligent students he’s met in his nearly 20 years as a counselor.

She says she loves me every time we speak. She calls me Momma again. She is into photography and gardening and dogs. She has taught me everything I know about love. And you know what? I think she is going to have a good future, after all. ■

Jackie McManus is the mother of three beautiful sons and one beloved daughter. She is a teacher in Washington state, working on a book of poetry called, “The Earthmover’s Daughter,” and a book based on this article.



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Password Hint

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman



I had my to-do list: finishing a few work items, booking some appointments and paying some bills. Nothing could get in my way.

I sat down at my computer, which prompted me for the password to my account. Hastily, I typed in the password. Access denied. Hmmm. I typed the word in again, deliberately striking each letter, sure I had made a mistake the first time. Denied again. Finally, a third attempt—now with a number at the end of my usual password.

At this point, the system took pity on me:

“Forgot your password? No problem. Type the word you see in the box below.”

I squinted at the combination of upper and lower case letters staggered across the box in different fonts. Was that a word? I attempted to type it.

“Try again.”

A new “word” appeared. Was that an upper case “I” or a lower case “l”? I angrily struck each key, wondering what kind of word has all consonants. I secretly worried that this was actually some kind of IQ test and feared the results.

“Try again.”

The newest word resonated no clearer than the last mock word. I vented my frustration by swearing at the computer—always a great solution to every problem.

Later, I shared my frustration with my friend.

“Oh, yeah—I hate that. You know there is a box you can check that will take you to a different prompt.”

“Oh. So, I don’t have to decipher those (faux) words?”

“No, I mean it will give you another word to try.”

Silence. It was definitely an IQ test, and worse, my friend now knew I couldn’t read made-up words. She picked up on the silence.

“You mean you can’t read ANY of them?” Her emphasis on the word ANY made me wonder whether I should answer this honestly. Now I knew how my sister felt when she couldn’t read the big “E” on the eye chart in second grade. I decided to throw all caution to the wind.

“Nope.”

Why is this so difficult? I shouldn’t have to jump through all these hoops to pay my OWN

electric bills. Actually, ANYONE should be able to access my account to pay my bills—no questions asked. You want to pay my cable bill, NO PROBLEM! Here you go. Gas bill? Sure, I’ll take you up on that offer.

I am all about password protection, but this is ridiculous. Can’t I just give my mother’s maiden name, my first pet’s name, the city in which I was born or any combination of these? What are the odds that the person hacking into my account could answer all of these questions?

I should get to choose the test that allows me to access MY accounts—not to mention how unfair all of this is at a time in my life where I am losing access to many nouns everyday. I feel like my head may explode from the things I need to remember on a daily basis—work appointments, soccer schedules, baseball practices, school events, doctors’ appointments, bills to pay, etc. It’s a miracle that I actually remember to pay the bills, and an obstacle that prevents me from accomplishing this is like a dagger to my heart. It’s the, “You know you really don’t have your \$\$@ together at all, despite what you may think.” And just like that, I’m outed...and by a faux word!

Also, for the record, if ANYONE wants to pay my cable bill, my mom’s maiden name is Smith. ■



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