

Raising Teens – Advice for Parents

Notes taken by Kathy Besser at a talk by Wendy Mogel, Ph.D. at Stanford's Challenge Success Plenary on October 15, 2010. Wendy is the author of two books, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* and *The Blessing of a B Minus*.

Tips for raising teens:

- Understand, first and foremost, that they are unlikely to fulfill all of your dreams or all of your nightmares!
- Make sure they have some type of paid employment in high school – this is much more important on a college application than a prestigious internship or volunteer trip to a third world country – college admissions officers want to see applicants holding “real” (i.e., wage earning) jobs
- Resist acting like a Sherpa or a maid for them
- Be observant without spying or prying
- Everything is a phase – both good and bad!
- Assume they can figure their own way out of problems
- Watching dumb YouTube™ videos is ok for decompression – silly as it may be, it's how they relax
- Teens miniaturize the world and try out a whole bunch of different things – this is normal! (The benefit is that they develop perseverance, creativity, and explore different options and roles)
- Remember that life is a journey, not a race!
- Unplug during family time
- Make time for family hobbies
- Two questions to frequently ask your teen: “Did you do your best?” “Were you kind today?”
- Share your struggles and ‘successful failures’ to normalize bumps in the road
- Middle schoolers need 50/50 (structured/unstructured) after school
- Know that teens play by 1) hanging out; 2) interactive games, 3) web surfing, etc. – FREE FROM EVALUATION!
- Transitions are hard – that's why your teen can be moody
- Be flexible but make sure you get a little family time every day (“we check in with each other and we care about each other”) – Every kids needs PDF (playtime | downtime | family time) daily!
- You WANT your child to extend your family (by having friends over, hanging out at friends' houses)
- Aim for 30 minutes of downtime before bedtime
- Take an interest in and encourage your teen's hobbies

Align your actions with your values:

- Define success on your own terms; e.g., our children will be 1) competent, self reliant, resilient and sound decision makers; 2) grounded in core values based on kindness, ethics and hard work; 3) passionate and excited

- about life's journey and its possibilities; 4) interpersonally skilled and emotionally intelligent; 5) socially aware, responsible and active
- Determine 4-5 guiding principles for your family – post them somewhere where everyone can see them; e.g., we believe in the primacy of family time, the value of hard work and effort, and in developing and supporting passions.
 - Align your behavior, messaging and family's use of time with your guiding principles (make a list of concrete ways you can enact this within your family)

Strategies for Change – Advice for Parents

Notes taken by Kathy Besser at a talk by Jim Lodbell of Stanford's Challenge Success at Cumberland Elementary on December 7, 2010. Note the reinforcement of what Wendy Mogel says!

Parents:

- Define success on your terms
- Maintain play time | down time| family time
- Allow kids space to develop on their own and have successful “failures”
- Ease performance pressure
- Build responsibility at home
- Trust your gut and resist parent peer pressure
- Seek mentors
- Strive to be a “good enough” parent

When you highly value the qualities below, results will follow:

- resiliency
- hard work
- effort
- kindness
- character
- responsibility

Two great questions to ask your kids after school or an activity:

“Did you have fun?”

“Did you do your best?”

Two book recommendations from Jim Lodbell:

The Power of Play by David Elkind

The Hurried Child by David Elkind