

Beyond Counseling...

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Understanding Your Teenager: *It's Easier Than You May Think...*

By Anthony G. Stowe, M.A.

RAISING KIDS: IT'S NOT LIKE IT USED TO BE

HOW WERE YOU RAISED, MOM AND DAD?

Magnolia, Texas - If you were raised like I was, it was different than today. When I was a boy, we wouldn't even think about doing what today's teens get by with now. The problems is, parents, we're a big part of why our kids are like they are today, good or bad. We're not all the blame, you understand, just part of the blame. How's that, you ask? Well, first, think back on how YOU were raised. Were your folks strict and were you disciplined for disobeying the rules? I was and so were many of you. In fact, if the truth be told, I couldn't even frown at my parents or I would almost get my head knocked off. You, too? There wasn't any Children's Protective Services to call when my folks got too rough with the switch, or whatever they found handy when they lit into us. This type of discipline often crossed the line, leaving bruises, marks, cuts, abrasions, and black-eyes. I don't know how this treatment affected you, but it left me angry inside and desirous of getting vengeance towards my parents. I grew up hating the world and possessed an awful "mean streak", my momma insisted. I didn't ask for it, but I feel my meanness was a learned behavior.



Is your teen often moody?

"I grew up hating the world and possessed an awful 'mean streak', my momma insisted..."

Author

Understanding Your Teenager

It's Easier Than You May Think

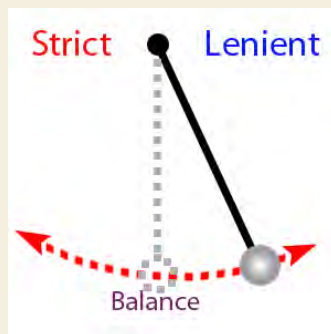
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HOW WERE YOU RAISED, MOM AND DAD?

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As our generation was “whipped” into line, the vow many made silently or under our breath was, “*I’m not going raise my kids like I was raised.*”

So, we kept our vows, reversing the borderline “abusive” way we were raised, except we often went too far the other way. The Pendulum has swung fully to the other side (ask Dr. Spock)



This was a great idea **except** parents went from too much discipline to not enough discipline. Kids feel safe when they have boundaries and guidelines. Why, they know you, as parents, are going to look after them and keep them safe providing you have boundaries and guidelines. While there are many factors that play a part in today's Teenage Society, withholding discipline was, by far, one of the worst things that happened. Why? Let the

results speak for themselves. The scripture says, “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Jeremiah. 29:15. This leaves us with the job of disciplining our children in a loving and balanced manner.

If you are a parent that was raised by “strict” parents or caregivers, it would be natural for you to try and “correct” the borderline abuse of those who were responsible for administering your “punishment”. I can still clearly see and feel the face of my parents as they disciplined me in a drunken, angry rage, cursing and kicking me repeatedly. How do you move away from those memories to a more “acceptable” method of parenting?

Now, stop and think for a minute or two on this thought: What can I do right now to help my children start giving me more respect and listen to my words?

TRY THESE FIRST

1. Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say. If you say it, back it up with action, not just words.
2. Start with setting achievable boundaries and goals, not impossible goals.
3. Speak to your teens the way you want them to speak to you. Praise in public, criticize in private.

4. Don't focus on HOW they are saying it, focus on WHAT they are saying. If they roll their eyes, thank God their eyes work properly, then listen to their message. Try not to correct too many behaviors at once. Save those battles for another day. Prioritize your needs and wants and work on one or two items at a time. For example, the list below may be some goals parents would like to change about their teen.

- Don't back talk me.
- Don't interrupt me when I am making a point.
- Don't “cop an attitude” with me.
- Quit arguing every time I ask you to do something.
- Stop lying to me and being deceitful.

Which goal would YOU choose first, as their parent? Some of these goals are behavior problems while others may be habits picked up at school. Which is more important to you? Changing bad behavior or changing their mannerisms and body language?

Questions like these are very important when you are attempting to change your teenager. Pick and choose your battles wisely and remember to never discuss issues with your teen when either of you are angry. Stay in control of your emotions will help your teen stay in control, too.

WATCH FOR OUR NEXT EDITION - To learn how to break the communication barrier.