

THE COUNSELOR

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PARENTING TEENS PART II

Approach & Solutions



It's an awesome privilege and challenge to raise children today. We're not just raising kids, we're raising future fathers and mothers! Children and teenagers need specific things from their parents to become well adjusted Godly adults. Most children are easier to manage than adolescents. Adolescence is another realm. You will need to promote growth in your teenagers too. What are the right limits and boundaries? How do you guide your teenagers without over controlling them? What does it mean to discipline in love? What are the best ways to handle academic issues, peer influences, drinking, drugs, sex, the internet, music, TV, and responsibilities? What about the rebellious, disrespectful, aggressive teen? How do you handle them? Do you have a high conflict family? How do you change and heal strained and damaged family relationships? Don't lose hope! You can approach these trials and tribulations with confidence and effectiveness. You can parent your teens with God's power and grace. You will have His peace. You will survive and flourish. Your teenagers need your blessing to really make it in life. They need your affirmation, acceptance, and love to go forward. Have you raised your children and teenagers God's way? Are there any lingering conflicts or issues that still need to be addressed and resolved with your children?

Promoting Growth

This begins long before the adolescent years. It starts the day your child is born, through your touch, words, and behaviors. What is your vision for your child? How do you see him or her? What kind of person would you like your child or teenager to become?

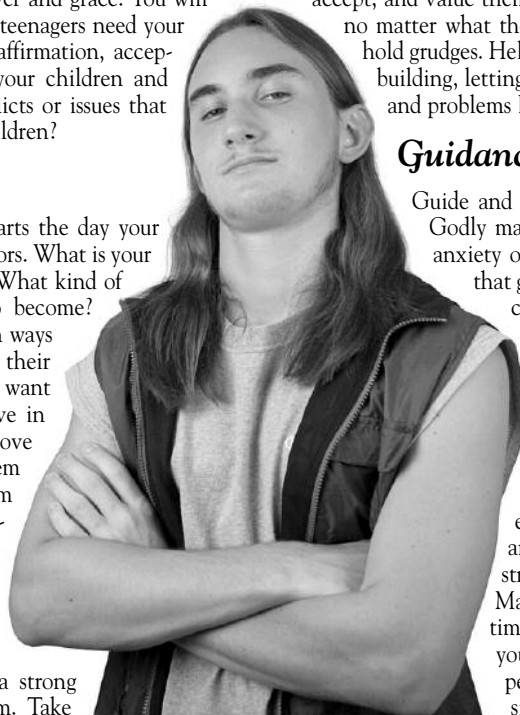
Develop your vision for them by relating to them in ways that ultimately promote growth. Most parents want their children to be Godly, law-abiding citizens. They want children who appreciate and love them and believe in themselves. Tell your children and teenagers you love them and that they are important to you. Tell them and show them that you believe in them. Give them opportunities to grow. Let them do things, make mistakes, and gain competence and confidence in their abilities. Teach them to do things around the house that require stretching their comfort zones. Let them mow the lawn, watch their younger siblings, go in the store to pick up a few things, help organize a garage sale, etc. Connect with them. Develop a strong healthy bond. Spend time doing things with them. Take

them places. Enjoy their company. Listen to what they have to say. Interact with them in ways that let them know you like connecting with them. Don't be their friend. Be their parent. Don't always teach or preach to them. Your relationship with them is everything. Teens are pulling away, expect some opposition, let go a little but keep an open, strong, ongoing relationship with them. Keep the lines of communication open. Listen intently, understand what they are saying and meaning. Talk plainly to them. Provide guidance. Promote growth in your teens by giving them direction. Help them think things through. Help them look at different possibilities and outcomes. Don't make their decisions for them. Don't lecture. Let them talk. Share your childhood experiences. Listen and engage them. Discuss their current and future challenges. Offer support. Help them evaluate their thinking, decisions, and behavior. Affirm, accept, and value them. Do this with your words and actions. Forgive them, no matter what their transgressions, as Christ has forgiven you. Do not hold grudges. Help your teenager strengthen at each stage of his journey, building, letting him do more, and letting go. Address your own issues and problems like anger, unforgiveness, past hurts, abuse, etc.

Guidance, Limits, and Boundaries

Guide and discipline your teenagers with love. Raise them in a Godly manner. Avoid disciplining your teenagers out of anger, anxiety or convenience. Model, teach, and promote behaviors that glorify Christ. Do this in a firm but loving way. Younger

children and teens need more direct involvement from you. Older ones need less. The primary goal is to help them develop self-discipline and become responsible. Help them see and evaluate their choices. Help them develop the freedom to make choices within well-defined limits established by you. Expand the parameters as they show more responsible choices and behavior. Use words like, "I see you decided, chose, or elected to..." when helping them see their thinking and how they set up certain situations. Teenagers need structure and stability. They need predictable routines. Maintain structures and routines like dinners, family time, church attendance, recreational activities, etc. Vary your approach to match the different dispositions and personalities of your teens. Some children are more sensitive than others. Do not be extremely strict or permis-





sive. Don't compromise your Christian values. Remain steadfast on the non negotiables. Avoid power struggles. Provide positive and negative consequences. Teach conflict-resolution skills. Model and help your teen go through conflict resolution steps in handling difficult people and situations. Teach them to: identify the problem; state the problem clearly; attack the problem (not the person); take turns talking about the problem; review the options; review their feelings; explain reasons; review the problem, feelings, proposed solutions, and expected outcomes. Stick to your decision in implementing specific solutions to problems. Don't waiver. Handle your anger and frustration appropriately when working with your teenagers. Express your thoughts and feelings calmly and clearly. Deescalate angry teens. Let them leave the room and return when they are more composed. Model good anger management and resolution skills. Build character in your children and teens. Build strong relationships with your teenagers first. This takes time, involvement, and doing things together. Love them. Acknowledge and encourage your teens. Build Godly character into them patterned after Christ.

Handling Specific Conflict Areas

Parenting teenagers with academic problems can be extremely challenging. Underachievement and school failure often leads to explosive arguments and bad feelings between parents and their teens. See my two newsletters on this topic for more detailed information and interventions (Vol.1 No. 3, Vol. 1 No. 4). Create a positive atmosphere to increase grades and set academic goals with your teenagers. Do this in a calm, loving manner. It's not about the grades when your teens underachieve or fail. They consciously and subconsciously sabotage themselves. It's not "laziness" but real concerns and fears that motivate them to do so poorly in school. Most of the time they are struggling with growing up and moving forward in life. Some struggle with the fear of success and others with the fear of failure. Processing responses like "It's hard to manage so much." help them understand their feelings and look at their fears. Use examining responses like "I see that you choose not to do your work." "It's interesting that you decided to be late today." "You seem angry about something." These responses help them go beyond their defenses and see how they set up the conditions that lead to underachievement. Review their choices, feelings and behavior without getting hooked. Hold them accountable. Set firm limits and consequences for irresponsibility in handling their academics. Refrain from long arguments and excessive punishments. Don't overdo it with groundings. Address parent-child issues too. Communication problems are common between parents and teens. The goal is to transition from rule setting to giving advice. Clearly communicate your position on key issues. Keep it simple and direct. Don't give in when you are challenged. Some areas are open for negotiation. Your teen may be reluctant to tell you many things. Read between the lines. Look for clues. They may be struggling with peer pressure. Respect



your teen. Your attitude and approach is critical when addressing your teenagers about negative peer influences. Help them evaluate their peer group. Discuss your concerns. Shut down negative influences when you see that your teen is taking on bad attitudes, language, and behaviors that could lead to serious problems. Do this in love. See my newsletter (Vol. 3 No. 1) on handling your teens suspected of substance abuse. Look for the warning signs which include drastic changes or unusual behaviors. Attitudes of defiance, sustained power struggles, anger, sullenness, withdrawal, inordinate time on the phone, seclusive, secretive behaviors, constant lying, and slipping out at night could be alcohol and drug related. It takes more than "just saying no." Confront your teen and seek professional help for substance abuse. Get involved. Help them understand the damaging affects of substance abuse and stop. Teens who spend massive amounts of unaccounted for time alone with the opposite sex may be sexually active. Approach them with love and concern when you suspect they are sexually active. Talk straight about the disastrous consequences physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for engaging in premarital sex. Sexual relationships outside marriage are destined for hardship and serious tribulations. You may have to take drastic measures to help them shut down their sexual acting out. You cannot ground them forever but you can block them from certain activities while they live with you. Don't withdraw your love from them. Tell them you disapprove and will make every effort to protect them. Protect your teens from internet pornography. Suspect internet pornography when you see many of the signs listed above. There will be a heaviness and burden in their spirit. They will seem preoccupied, distant, and spend a lot of time alone. Talk candidly with them. Get them professional Christian help. Help him or her guard their mind, body and spirit. Monitor your teenager's music, movie and television viewing. Don't let them listen to or watch degrading and corrupt things that will pull them away from God and the Christian life. Talk straight with them about your concerns and then remove them from these materials. Intervene when you know things are headed in a bad direction with these activities. Draw the same lines with their clothes too. Help your children develop responsibilities before they become teenagers. Hold the line in love as you discipline and help shape responsible behavior. Do not spoil them or bail them out of trouble. Live responsibility in front of them. Help them build on successes. Readjust as they go back and forth before they are ready to advance with more privileges. Help them look inside by making processing responses geared at highlighting their feelings. "Moving forward is a little scary." This helps them develop internal motivation. Hold them accountable without long drawn out wars. Do not let your teen run your house. Address defiance, rebellion, disrespect, and aggressive behaviors. Process the situation and their emotions. Hold them accountable with consequences. Pray for your teenager. Heal damaged relationships. Make the first move. Proceed slowly, prayerfully, and patiently. Relationship repair work takes time. Admit your mistakes and faults. Forgive them. Forgiveness is the key to healing. Let God guide you in this process. You will survive your teenagers' years. Reevaluate regulations as you progress. Let go as your teen becomes older and more responsible. Stay close to God every step of the way. Enlist the

support from the church, your youth pastor, and other Godly parents of teenagers. Get professional Christian counseling if you find yourself completely overwhelmed, exhausted, and overrun. Seek help for your teens if they are depressed, addicted, seriously acting out, and do not respond to you.



The Blessing

Bless your children and teenagers. Let them carry a warm, loving, accepting image of you in their head. Choose to live and be a blessing for them. They receive the blessing from you when you affirm, accept, and value them. Do this with words and prayers before God. Do like the Patriarchs of old. Bless and dedicate them to God. This deep approval and commitment from you before God blesses them richly. They will know and feel the blessing from you deep down inside. Do this with your words, actions, prayers, and relationship with them. They will go through life knowing you love them. God will sanctify, provide for, and bless them. Your teenagers will carry this blessing into eternity with Christ! Don't hold back. Give them your blessing. God honors your prayers. He will bless them. They will be blessed, not cursed.

F.Y.I.

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SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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2/12 - Anger and Forgiveness
 Second Baptist Church
 Woodway (Room 3064)

3/26 - Sexual Addiction/False Intimacy - Part I
 Second Baptist Church
 Woodway (Room 3064)

4/30 - Sexual Addiction/False Intimacy - Part II
 Woodway (Room 3064)

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