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JULY-AUGUST 2019 Volume 11, Issue 6

your teen for parents

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NEW! Your Teen has a podcast—just search for **Your Teen with Sue and Steph** in your favorite podcast app.

Love from our fans...

Just wanted to say, I've started following *Your Teen for Parents* not long ago and I love every article! I feel I need to save every link so I can come back to it when needed. Thank you! – Melissa Hebert

I appreciate your interviews and your website so much. You really pick great people to interview. – Jacie Johnson

I subscribed to *Your Teen* magazine this evening for my daughter. The articles you publish seem so helpful. Congrats to the writing staff. – Bea Adzema

I've appreciated the wit and wisdom of *Your Teen* for years and have had a "parenting crush" on Sue and Steph too (if that is a thing!) This podcast brings a new dimension to the advice and candor of the magazine and makes me love them and the Your Teen content even more. —@Jm6cftw

More @ yourteenmag.com...

Humor

What goes through a soccer mom's head?

bit.ly/soccermomthoughts

Health

More than a picky eater? Maybe it's ARFID.

bit.ly/whatisarfid

est. 1896

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Dream. Dare. Do.

College choices as of May 22, 2019.

As a kid, I loved riding rollercoasters, flying on airplanes, going on breathtaking hikes, and sleeping on the beach under the stars. I never worried about anything. I was young and invincible.

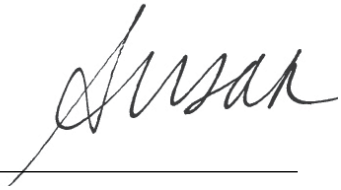
At some point, my enthusiasm for the thrill turned to fear. I'm pretty sure it coincided with becoming a mother. Now it was my job to protect, to direct, and, frankly, to control.

Suddenly, danger was everywhere. I read articles about people plummeting to their death from a rollercoaster. No more roller coasters. Plane crashes? Maybe my husband Dan and I should fly separately. A hike at Yosemite National Park where kids had died the week before? I begged Dan not to take the kids. The list goes on. From the second my kids were born, I worried (and worry) that something might happen to us (leaving them orphans) or to them. The worry drives me mad.

It's perfectly rational and parental to want to keep our kids safe. But can it go too far? Our feature, starting on page 32, asks that question. Particularly for boys, who generally seem to crave risk-taking more obviously than girls do. What are we taking away from them when we try to limit all danger? I was surprised by the answer, and you might be, too. (I have to admit I'm still going to worry.)

There's lots more to dig into in this summer issue, including great essays from our contributors on everything from Broadway music to boyfriend sleepovers to connecting with a son with autism (pages 30, 41, and 60); celeb interviews (we love Soledad and Nancy—see pages 23 and 56); and loads of useful guidance on topics from crushes to celiac disease to email (yeah, my teens didn't like email, either). And don't miss our refreshed Stuff We Love products section, chock-full of fun summer finds (page 11).

Enjoy the Read!



FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

Soledad O'Brien is an award-winning journalist, speaker, author and philanthropist—and she's also a straight-talking mom of four teens. Check out her refreshing wisdom on page 23.

In her practice, **Dr. Sanam Hafeez** tackles a wide array of matters ranging from social media addiction to serious mental health issues. We couldn't stump her with the tricky parenting dilemma on page 41.

Emmy Award-winning journalist **Nancy O'Dell** is also a TV host, author, producer and entrepreneur. Our chat about her career and life with her almost-teenager begins on page 56.

Don't miss **Hannah Grieco**'s essay on page 60. A former teacher, current parent advocate, and mom of three special needs kids, she shares a lovely story about connecting with her son who has autism.

WE ASKED TEENS...

What's your favorite family activity during the summertime?

My favorite family summer activity is going swimming in my pool because it's a fun way to hang out with my parents and sister. I love swimming so much, and I get to play lots of fun games like Marco Polo and volleyball. I also love going camping. There are so many awesome lakes up north where I live. My family has a camping trailer, which makes it a little more comfortable. We get to make campfires and eat lots of junk food and hit the beach; sometimes, I even make a new friend.

—**Sarah Abbott** is a teen actress based in Whitby, Ontario. She appears in the NBC show *The InBetween* and the recent Netflix original *The Silence*. Past projects include *Black Mirror* and the TV movie *Mommy's Little Princess*.

My favorite family activity is our precious beach trips. On the drive to the beach, everyone is buzzing with excitement for our new adventure. Once we can smell the salty air and feel the hot, sticky humidity, we all forget the bags in the car, kick off our flip-flops, and charge towards the beach. After swimming in the ocean, my family plays in the sand, laughing with one another. We spend the day playing Phase 10 until the sun sets, then head to a souvenir shop for a little something to add to our collection.
—**Anya**, *San Marino, California*

I like camping with my family. This is fun because I like sharing a cramped space overnight with the people that I am closest with, bonding with them in the outdoors, and spending some time away from civilization and technology.
—**Natalie**, *North Bend, Washington*

My favorite summertime activity is most definitely going to Cape Cod every summer and spending a week on the beach. This is so much fun because we get some quality time as a family away from work and school, and it gives us a chance to hang out offline for a while.
—**Harry**, *Framingham, Massachusetts*

I enjoy eating dinner outside with my family. I find it really relaxing and just a pleasant experience, especially on a nice night.
—**Jeanne-Marie**, *Cranston, Rhode Island*

One of my favorite family activities during the summer is when we go out on the river. Riding on the waves is a highlight, as well as simply being on the water. We go out together in the evening and enjoy the scenery.
—**Hope**, *Cicero, New York*

My family goes to a beach every summer for a family reunion of sorts. We get to talk and eat good food a block away from the beach and can walk to every store in the small town! I always have fun getting to see my cousins for four or five days instead of scattered times throughout the year.
—**Tova**, *Lake Forest Park, Washington*

#ParentHack: Front Seat to Chat, Back Seat for Quiet

After yet another "fantastic" car ride with my 14-year-old daughter, I told her that going forward, if she's in the mood to talk, she's welcome to sit in the front seat. If she's grumpy, crabby, or otherwise wishes to be left alone, she may sit in the back.

She's an athlete with long practices after long school days, and some days, she just wants to recharge on the 20-minute ride home. I've tried sticking to safe topics, but they were met with the usual eye roll, heavy sigh, or short answers. She'd get frustrated, I'd get frustrated, and something that wasn't really a big deal would turn into an argument. I'm finding two benefits from this new approach. First, she knows that if she's not feeling up to it, she can use the car ride to process everything rolling around in her head after a long day. By going to the back seat, I'll know she needs some time to decompress. Second, she knows that there are expectations that come with privileges like sitting up front, having control over the temp, DJing the radio or a Spotify playlist, or otherwise not being stuck in the back. Some days, it works. She bounces into the front seat and willingly shares the funny things that happened during her day, a frustration from school or practice, or the new song I've just got to hear. Some days, she gets in, huffs and sighs, and glares out the window. I'll ask her, "You sure you want to sit up here? Would you rather sit in the back?" Sometimes she'll actually move to the back, and that's totally fine.

Sometimes, though, all she needs is that little nuanced reminder that I'm more than an Uber driver under her command, and she'll offer an apology and make an effort to be pleasant.

Cheryl Jung *is a former engineer turned volunteer school librarian who is raising three teenage student athletes. She reads in the carpool line and needs an iced tea and a paper planner to survive.*

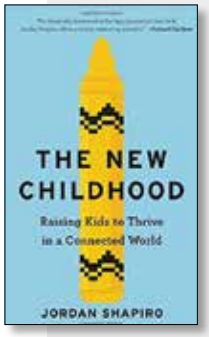
Want to share your story? Email your idea to editor@yourteenmag.com.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

The New Childhood: Raising Kids to Thrive in a Connected World

Is screen time really so bad?

Jordan Shapiro is a professor at Temple University, a world-renowned thought leader on global policy and education, and a father of two. In *The New Childhood*, he tackles the touchy subject of kids and technology. What he offers is a different, refreshing perspective that relies on research and cultural history to make a case for less parental worry when it comes to tech.



As Shapiro points out, our kids are fully immersed in a connected culture, easily adapting to new products and technology in ways that can make less tech-savvy parents a little nervous. But Shapiro says the hand-wringing is unnecessary—in fact, kids are developing the social skills they need through their digital connections. Creating space in a virtual world to interact with friends is no different than carving out space in the real world for in-person connections, he says.

In addition to his solid research and examples, it's Shapiro's perspective as a dad that makes the pro-tech message of *The New Childhood* particularly refreshing. He encourages parents and educators to ditch an old-fashioned, outdated mindset and embrace technology as a helpful tool for education and engagement. In fact, he compares playing video games with our kids to playing catch in the backyard—we're still bonding with our children; the playing field has simply changed.

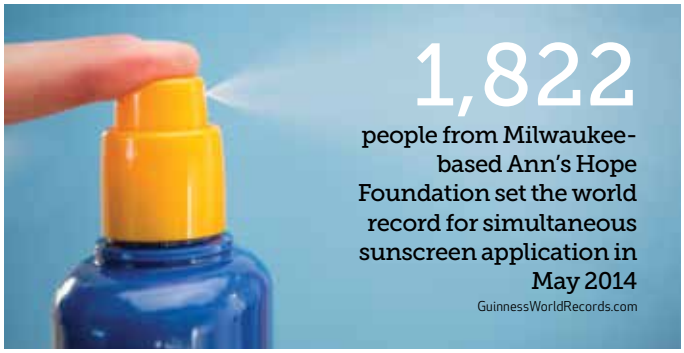
Though raising children in a digital world may seem daunting, Shapiro believes it doesn't have to be. Not every parent may be ready to embrace everything that technology has to offer, but Shapiro's research supports his theory that raising tech-savvy kids is not a bad thing. Modern childhood offers unprecedented opportunities to learn and explore and, yes, connect.

Looking at the topic of kids and tech through *The New Childhood*'s lens of cultural evolution, this perspective not only seems reasonable, but feels very encouraging. —*Kristina Wright*

By the Numbers...

74%
of kids who attended summer camp said they ended up doing things they were afraid to do at first.
ACACamps.org

1905
was the year that popsicles were invented by an 11-year-old boy.
CountryLiving.com



1,822
people from Milwaukee-based Ann's Hope Foundation set the world record for simultaneous sunscreen application in May 2014
GuinnessWorldRecords.com

25-30%
of school-year learning is lost over the summer.
Brookings.edu

51%
of Americans say shopping is their favorite summer vacation activity.
FactRetriever.com

You Are the #1 Influence on Your Teen

Did you know the summer months are known as **"the 100 deadliest days"** for teens? As parents, you should have open discussions about expectations before your teen heads out to a party, event or activity. The **Party Checklist** and **Teen Promise** below are great tools to guide these conversations.

Party Checklist

Dear (insert name of teen):
If we don't know, then you can't go.
What is happening?
Why/what is the purpose?
When are you going?
Where will this event take place (address & phone #)?
Who is going to be there?
Who are the parents? Will the parents be home?
When will you be home?
How will you get there?
How will you get home?

Love, Mom and Dad

Dear mom and dad,
I promise to call you if there is alcohol or any other illegal substance at this party. I also promise to let you know if I am feeling pressured to do something against my will.

Love, (insert name of teen)

Teen Promise

SAY – Social Advocates for Youth
A Program of Bellefaire JCB

*SAY – Social Advocates for Youth is a prevention and early intervention program of Bellefaire JCB for students in middle and high school throughout Cuyahoga County. *SAY school-based services are offered for free in the following suburban school districts: Beachwood, Chagrin Falls, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Mayfield, Orange, Shaker Heights and Solon.*

For Information:

Chris Ruma-Cullen, LISW-S, CDCA
Director of SAY

216.320.8203
cullenc@bellefairejcb.org
www.e-say.org

Beach Buys

These poolside picks and beach-ready buys are a shore thing.

About face

Need a safer facial sunscreen? Sustainably produced with an SPF 30, Coural Care checks off all the boxes for conscious consumers: 100% organic, plant-based, reef-safe, and cruelty-free.
$22, *couralcare.com*

Shelf discovery

What do beach reads, cell phones, icy beverages, and sunscreen have in common? They all need a place to perch. Enter the Shore Shelf, a portable tray that easily clamps onto any beach chair.
$24.99, *shoreshelf.com*

Say sayonara to sand

A beach towel that's sand-free and quick-drying? Yes, please! Made in Australia, the lightweight Tesalate Towel is designed to dry in half the time of a regular towel and easily shakes off sand.
$59, *tesalate.com*

Seal the deal

Itsy-bitsy teenie-weenie bikinis may be so yesterday, but the Itzy Ritzy "Travel Happens" Sealed Wet Bag is of the moment. Store your swimsuits, gym clothes, and other wet items in this leakproof, machine-washable wet bag made for on-the-go ease.
$17.99, *itzyritzy.com*

Throwing shade

Why shell out for an overpriced beach cabana when you can just bring your own? This large CoolCabana measures 8′ x 8′ and provides enough shade for two beach chairs but is easy enough for just one person to transport, set up, and tear down. (Now that's cool.)
$139, *coolcabanas.com*

No slouch

Whether lounging poolside or by the ocean, keep that beach towel in place with the BandaBeau Towel Tamer. Available in 10 designs, the towel tamer also includes a handy-dandy storage function for keeping valuables out of sight (and out of the hot sun).
$29.99, *BandaBeau.com*

H2-Oh!

Turn on the water works this summer with these hydration helpers.

Refresh Rx

Keep your cool when the heat is on with Misty Mate MistPro3. This portable personal misting device comes in handy at the gym, the beach, on hiking trails, and just about anywhere summer takes you. No batteries or electricity required!
$49.99, *mistymate.com*

Flavor fuel

Fruit-infused water is trending, and the HYDY Estiva Water Bottle makes it easy to make and enjoy your own throughout the day. (Hydration goal: complete.) Made of clear, BPA-free Tritan plastic, this eco-friendly, insulated thermos comes in six stylish colors.
$25, *myhydy.com*

Making Waves

Your teen will be (blue) crushing on these surf-ready products.

Surf's up

Made by the original inventors of the boogie board, this 42" Morey Mach 7 Bodyboard gets instant cred on surf turf. This middle choice of three sizes is a nice fit for teens who want to catch some tasty waves.
$149.99, *beachgoer.com*

Slyde Rules

On "Shark Tank," the Slyde Handboard snagged two enthusiastic thumbs up from Ashton Kutcher and Mark Cuban, and we love it, too. A handheld mini-surfboard of sorts, the Grom Soft-Top Fun Handboard taps into an all-new kind of surf action.
$59.99, *slydehandboards.com*

Summer Style

In the summertime, the shopping is fine.

That's a wrap

Who doesn't love a multitasking garment for effortless summer chic? The Mer-Sea Linen Wrap delivers as a wrap, scarf, and sarong all in one—complete with a voile carrying case with bamboo handles and matching linen sash that doubles as a bracelet or ponytail holder.
$89, *mersea.com*

Brimming with style

No list of beach essentials is complete without a stylish summer hat, and Wallaroo's Sydney Women's Sun Protection Hat fits the bill beautifully. An internal drawstring helps adjust the fit for any head size, and it's easily rolled up and stashed in a beach bag.
$42, *wallaroohats.com*

Nautical and nice

Come sail away with this eco-friendly line of handmade totes and accessories. Made of recycled sails rescued from landfills, the new Sea Bags line debuted in March 2019 featuring an array of collections—from zodiac-inspired to lobster-rific. We're digging this Grey Chebeague Handbag for its laid-back beachy vibe and roomy interior.
$195, *seabags.com*

This one goes to Eleven

Transport the Stranger Things-verse straight to your lawn with this giant inflatable Demogorgon Sprinkler. (80's soundtrack not included.)
$99.99, *fun.com*

Strange Things

These fun odes to the Upside Down will turn your world right side up.

To the Max

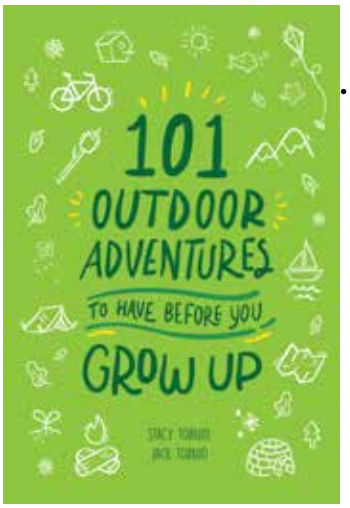
Just in time for the premiere of Season Three, teens can re-immerse themselves in the "Stranger Things" world with the young adult novelization of the popular Netflix series. *Stranger Things: Runaway Max* tells the story of the newest kid on the block, Max Mayfield, and how she made her way—for better or for worse—to haunted Hawkins.
$17.99, *rhcbooks.com*

Let's Go Outside

Instill a healthy dose of wanderlust in your teen this summer.

Oh, hello!

The brainchild of an outdoorsy 14-year-old from Chicago, Hello World Outdoors aims to get teens off their phones and into the open. These themed boxes are designed to do just that—such as "Julia's Beach Box," which includes a beach towel, collapsible water bottle, and Waboba outdoor games.
$59.99, *helloworldoutdoors.com*



101 and counting

Wondering how to inspire your teen to enjoy the great outdoors? Let us count the ways with *101 Outdoor Adventures to Have Before You Grow Up*. Written by mother-and-son team Stacy and Jack Tornio, the book acts as a tempting summer to-do list for hiking, biking, fishing, camping, and much more.
$19.95, *amazon.com*

Plenty of fish

If your teen just can't part with their electronics, the Eco-Popper might be a happy medium. The digital fishing lure allows your teen to see beneath the water's surface via live video stream, up their fishing game, and share their successes on social. They'll fall hook, line, and sinker for this one!
$189, *Walmart.com*

Can Breakfast Boost Your Teen's Body Image?

Morning family time has benefits, too.

Dawn Forsberg and her teens start each weekday with breakfast and whatever conversation they can manage first thing in the morning. On a typical day, they sit down at the table, eat fruit and eggs, and put all phones away. "The routine allows for some calm, and they start the day with good nutrition," said Forsberg of her children.

A good breakfast routine like this may actually be even more beneficial. A recent study from the University of Missouri found that family breakfasts can boost the way teens see themselves. After reviewing survey data from over 12,000 adolescents, researchers found that both eating breakfast frequently during the week and regularly eating breakfast with a parent were each linked with a more positive body image.

Teens are battling unrealistic body and appearance ideals, especially those that appear on social media, says study author Dr. Ginny Ramseyer Winter, an assistant professor in the University of Missouri School of Social Work and director of the MU Center for Body Image Research and Policy. Ramseyer Winter noted that "bolstering positive body image helps counter the negative messages youth receive from other places."

She hypothesizes that when teenagers build strong relationships with close family, their relationship with themselves—including body image—is often better.

Unfortunately, daily breakfasts may not be doable for every family, given early school start times and busy work schedules. But even small, infrequent changes could be helpful. Ramseyer Winter suggests emphasizing family meal time when possible, perhaps eating breakfast as a family one day and dinner another day, which also has positive benefits.

For busy families who'd like to attempt a healthy family breakfast, Jessica Braider, a certified health coach and CEO of the online meal planning service The Scramble, offers these tips:

1. On the weekend, make a big batch of a favorite breakfast food, like muffins or frittatas. Freeze the leftovers for the week.

2. Go for quick proteins like scrambled or fried eggs.

3. Prepare healthy one-bowl meals like granola with yogurt and fruit.

4. Not big on conventional breakfasts? Try an apple with cheese or rice cakes with soft cheese, bell peppers, and cucumbers.

Braider adds that if there's not enough time to sit down, teens should take the meal with them. Breakfast has too many health benefits to skip.

—Kristin O'Keefe

Photos by Beth Segal

How Offering Kindness Can Enhance Your Teen's Well-Being

This simple strategy can reduce anxiety and increase happiness.

A teen's sense of well-being can be disrupted by feeling left out of a social media post or scoring lower on a test than their friends. While parents may try to cheer up their children with chocolate or by telling them to focus on their other successes, a study from Iowa State University offers different advice: Your teens can boost their mood by wishing happiness for others.

Psychology professor Douglas Gentile and two colleagues tested the benefits of three different techniques intended to reduce anxiety and increase happiness or well-being. In the first, students were instructed to walk around campus and with each encounter sincerely think, "I wish for this person to be happy." The two other strategies tested were students searching for a connection with people they encountered or thinking of a downward social comparison (how they might be better than others).

The researchers compared each technique with a control group and found that those who wished others well felt happier, more connected, and empathetic, as well as less anxious. The connection group also felt increased empathy, while the downward social comparison had a significantly worse impact than wishing others well.

"Walking around and offering kindness to others in the world reduces anxiety and increases happiness and feelings of social connection," said Gentile. "It's a simple strategy that doesn't take a lot of time that you can incorporate into your daily activities."

Gentile understands that this new practice might be more challenging for anxious teens, as anxiety can cause a person to close up to protect themselves from the outside. "That is like putting the lid on a pot of heating water—it will cause the water to boil sooner," said Gentile. "If, instead, we push our focus outside, that can let things cool down a bit by giving it more space." Gentle encouragement to think of others can help. "Ironically, in my experience, wishing someone else the exact thing you wish you had at that moment often makes you feel better."

Parents, take note. Modeling the behavior of being outwardly happy for someone (even when they have what you don't) has two benefits: It's good for your teen to see the practice in action—and it just might improve your mood, too.

—Kristin O'Keefe

ROASTED GRAPEFRUIT CHICKEN

Serves 4 , prep time: 10 minutes, cook time: 1 hour, 50 minutes (plus 2 hours marinating time)

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon plus 2½ teaspoons kosher salt

1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1 teaspoon dried marjoram

1 teaspoon paprika

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 whole chicken (about 4 pounds)

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

¾ cup fresh grapefruit juice (reserve one of the juiced halves)

3 large carrots, halved lengthwise and cut into thirds

3 cups quartered red potatoes (about 1 pound)

1 medium yellow onion, cut into 8 wedges

5 garlic cloves

DIRECTIONS:

- In a small bowl, stir together 1 tablespoon plus 1½ teaspoons of the salt, 1 teaspoon of the black pepper, the granulated garlic, marjoram, paprika, and cayenne. Set aside.
- Put the chicken on a baking sheet or large plate, and coat the skin with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Sprinkle the spice blend on all sides of the chicken to liberally and evenly coat. Cover the chicken and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or as long as overnight.
- When ready to cook the chicken, preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Set the chicken on the lined baking sheet.
- In a small bowl, stir together the grapefruit juice and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Set aside.
- In a medium bowl, combine the carrots, potatoes, onion, and garlic cloves with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon black pepper and toss to coat evenly. Distribute the vegetables evenly on the baking sheet around the chicken. Fold the juiced grapefruit half and stuff it inside the chicken.
- Bake the chicken for 30 minutes, then baste it with the grapefruit juice mixture. Return it to the oven and bake for a total time of 80 to 90 minutes (or 20 minutes per pound), basting every 15 minutes. If the chicken becomes too brown, loosely cover it with aluminum foil.
- Serve and enjoy!

TERI'S TIP: To check if a whole chicken is cooked, wiggle the drumstick; if it moves loosely, then it's done.

The secret weapon for my spin on everyday chicken? Grapefruit. I will not name names, but I know a vegetarian or two who will sneak a piece, because it is simply so delicious, with its crispy, citrusy browned skin. Part of the trick to this great one-dish meal is the spice blend, which you can make and sprinkle on the chicken in the morning before you go to work—or even the night before. The roasted vegetables absorb the dripping chicken juices as they cook, and there's something about the combination of the chicken fat, spices, and grapefruit that transforms the vegetables.

Perfect for a summer picnic or outdoor gathering, this dish is sure to satisfy. And since it's free of grains, dairy, and gluten (as well as Paleo/Whole-30 friendly), it's one everyone can enjoy.
—Teri Turner

Home Alone for the Evening

You (and your teenager) can rest easier knowing they're safe.

One of the perks of parenting older kids is never again having to text around for a babysitter for Saturday night. But does your kid have the safety skills to stay home alone?

Review these safety tips with your teenagers to equip them for their night of texting and Netflix—and the start of a lifetime of confident self-sufficiency:

• Make sure all doors are locked the whole time. It's rare, but intruders can come in even when someone is home and awake.

• Close and lock all first-floor (or otherwise accessible) windows before heading upstairs or to bed.

• Make sure the stove and oven are off. (Cooking at home alone is okay, as long as your teenager is typically attentive and responsible at the stove.)

• Always have a charged phone and/or access to a charged landline. (Even if there's no emergency, we parents will worry if we can't reach our kids.) Of course, they'll need to know how to reach emergency services in your area.

• Ensure that your kids know how to turn the water supply off (to the toilets and sinks, at least, if not the main valve for the whole house). Bonus points: They should know how to use a plunger.

• If they're going to use any appliances—washer, dryer, dishwasher, etc.—be sure that they know how to do so. You don't want to come home to the classic dish-washing-liquid-in-the-dishwasher bubble explosion in your kitchen!

• Power outages happen. Check that they know where flashlights are, as well as fresh batteries. (And, naturally, that they know how to change flashlight batteries. They do, right?)

• Teens should never tweet or post or otherwise share on social media that they're home alone.

Finally—and this just might happen to be from personal experience—remind them not to chain the outside doors and not to lock screen doors. (You know, the ones that no one carries keys for.) Otherwise, parents will be ringing bells and banging on doors to rouse a (very safely) sleeping teenager.

—Sharon Holbrook

Photo by **Beth Segal**

Hit the Gym

Experts offer advice for a safe and healthy teen workout.

By Cheryl Maguire

My husband and I are fitness fanatics who exercise six days a week. When our twin 14-year-olds asked if they could join us at the gym, we were elated that they wanted to share our love of fitness and spend time with us.

But during our first workout they had lots of questions that we couldn't answer, such as:

"Which machine should I use?"

"Should my target heart rate be the same as the one listed on the elliptical machine?"

"Is it okay if I lift weights with you?"

Even though we are well-versed in different types of exercise, all our knowledge was based on adult workouts. To find guidelines for teenagers, I turned to the experts.

First Things First

Prior to beginning a new fitness program, teens should have a physical with their primary care provider to assess their health and screen for any injuries or illnesses that might make training unsafe, says Dr. Teri Metcalf McCambridge, a pediatric sports medicine specialist at Towson Orthopaedic Associates in Baltimore.

After being cleared for participation, teens should learn how to properly use the machines and weights. Most gyms have personal trainers who offer a free session on how to use the equipment, and teens can also ask staff members for advice as questions arise. It is important that teens start out slowly with any routine or program to prevent injuries.

Using Cardio Equipment

Most gyms offer a variety of cardio equipment, such as ellipticals, treadmills, and stationary bicycles, but teens should be supervised at first to make sure they use these safely. In her practice, McCambridge has seen injuries to patients from all of the following mishaps: riding a stationary bike extremely fast and then releasing one foot; running on a treadmill at top speed then falling off the back and hitting the wall; and running on a treadmill in bare feet and catching a toe under the belt. Teens, she says, should "wear shoes and use the equipment only to their level of ability."

What's a Good Workout?

Cardio equipment often has built-in heart-rate sensors. Many trainers recommend using the heart-rate monitor on machines to target an effort zone that will burn calories and strengthen the heart. But what's an appropriate rate for teens? "Children's maximal heart rates tend to be lower than adults," says McCambridge. If your teen is interested in doing the calculations, there are guidelines from the National Council on Strength and Fitness: Under the age of

20, multiply age by .7, and then subtract that result from 208. (208 – (.7 x age))

But if you'd prefer to skip the math, there's a simple guideline, says McCambridge: Children ages 6 to 17 should exercise for one hour every day.

Strength Training

In addition to using cardio equipment, teens can strength train using their own body weight, free weights, or weight machines. But they should use caution and avoid overdoing it, says Daryl Thayil, a personal trainer and content creator for the website Advanced Weightlifting.

"Make sure that they are training with proper form and appropriate weights," says Thayil. "While their bodies are in rapid growth and the spine is maturing, improper technique can lead to significant injury." That's why Thayil recommends good coaching—whether it's a trainer at the gym or even a strength coach through their school.

Group Fitness Classes

Most gyms offer a wide array of group fitness classes, and many gyms allow kids to start participating in these around age 13. Both Thayil and McCambridge recommend yoga as an addition to a teen's fitness routine. "Yoga is a great option for group classes and teaches a different kind of strength and control than other fitness group classes," says Thayil.

It's Worth It

Whichever way your family chooses to exercise, it's worth pursuing an active life. Active teens "have demonstrated better performance in school, improved bone density, improved lipid profiles, improved self-esteem, and a decrease in high-risk behaviors," says McCambridge. Plus, says Thayil, there's the discipline and patience required, as well as proven reductions in anxiety and depression.

For our family, the best parts are seeing our twins get stronger both physically and mentally and having the chance for real conversations. Hey, the actual exchange of words may only be about their target heart rate, but the togetherness is enough to make our family trips to the gym our number-one priority. ■

Is the Gym Too Pricey?

The cost of gym memberships can vary depending on the area and options offered. Sometimes health insurance plans offer partial reimbursement for gym membership fees. There are also free ways to have a gym workout without belonging to a gym. Consider these:

- Some high schools have gym equipment available for free to residents after school hours.
- If you have a cable subscription, check out the On Demand option for free workouts.
- Look in your local library or on YouTube for workout videos

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Q&A with Soledad O'Brien

You probably know her best as a broadcast journalist who has reported for CNN, *Weekend Today*, and HBO's *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*. Or perhaps you follow her outspoken Twitter account. Soledad O'Brien is also the CEO of Starfish Media Group and the co-founder and board chair of PowHERful, an organization that provides mentoring and support to get low-income girls to and through college. And did we mention she and her husband are raising four teenagers? She spoke with us about the lessons she learned from her parents, and how they affect her own parenting style.

You've been open about having recently lost both your parents. The way you speak about both of them, they sound like such remarkable people. I was curious how they impacted the parent that you are today.

I think they were remarkable people, but they were also just very much basic, involved parents. My mom was a teacher, my dad was a professor, they were both home by 5, we had dinner at home every night together. They were very solidly middle class, with a lot of kids. That didn't mean a lot of big vacations; that meant camping vacations. The way it's affected my parenting and the other work that I do is I recognize the value of just being there and giving people a sense of stability. We just didn't have any drama.

You also had love, right?

Yes, I would say my parents definitely had a sense of love, but also of respect: You can do great things; you are a fully functioning smart human being. I appreciate the love, certainly, but the respect meant that they trusted you to make smart choices and do great things in your life.

Do you feel like you and your husband are giving that to your children?

Gosh, yes, I think we try to give it to our

kids. We try to give it to the young women who are scholars [with PowHERful foundation.] A sense that you're good enough, you're perfect, even if you're a slob, and you run late, and you keep losing your wallet. That's okay, that's who you are. You get to be you. It's really seeing people as individuals, not as an extension of you, like if my kid goes to "X" school, somehow I look better. And certainly not that they have to accomplish something to be seen as valuable.

Compared to earlier generations of parents, there are lots of people doing way too much for their kids. Why do you think we see so many parents helicoptering?

I understand that instinct because no one wants to see anyone suffer. When my parents were dying, I wish I could have gotten in there and said, "I'll take the medicine, I'll do what I have to," but life doesn't really work that way. Truthfully, as they grow up, they have to learn how to fall and get back up. The key is the getting-back-up part. That's where the lesson is. I think because I travel a lot, and my husband is of the same mindset, we just don't have a huge instinct to block and tackle for our kids.

What wisdom from your parents have you shared with your kids?

My mom was a big list-maker, and I'm a big list-maker. I just find it so very helpful to start with a list. Every day I make a list about what I am going to accomplish, even on my vacation. I think the way to keep yourself on track, especially after a disappointment, is to have a list. Go ahead and be sad for a little bit, but then start a new list of what you are going to do next.

You have twin boys who are 14, and two girls who are 17 and 18. Is your oldest headed to college? How are you doing with that?

I'm excited for her. I've never been the weepy mom. I'll definitely miss her being around, but I'm excited for her, and that definitely outweighs any kind of loss for me.

You sound like a chill parent. Do you have any rules in your house around technology and curfew, things like that?

I've got four kids; of course I've got rules around technology and curfew. People can't take their technology to bed, so they have to give it to me. It's kind of a weird rule for me. Just in case someone calls me about a news story, I tend to keep my phone nearby, but I've gotten better about moving it to the next room.

For curfew, it really depends. My daughters are 17 and 18, so it really depends on the person, the party, what time of year it is. But we're very strict about people checking in and making sure I know where they are. I think we just try to keep a lot of open lines of communication while making sure everybody sticks to the rules.

Last time we spoke to you, which was several years ago, you said you hadn't had any of the teenage terrors that you'd heard about. Do you still stand by that?

Yes. They are so much more fun as teenagers than they were as toddlers. I always thought the myths about this are just not true; they're really fun, they're smart. You want to travel and do stuff with them. I think when they were younger, it was just, "This has to go here, we've got to pick up this person, I'm late, I forgot to get this." It was very stressful. Now, vacations are fun because the kids are very self-entertaining. I feel like I'm reaping the benefits, finally.

How do you deal with online criticism? Do your kids see it and get bothered by it?

I think they treat it like I do; it means nothing to me. I remember once I posted a picture of myself and my daughter Cecilia, and someone said she was ugly, and she just laughed about it: *This person is obviously nuts; who cares*. I don't think she thinks anyone on Twitter is somebody important that you have to worry about their opinion.

Tell me about your foundation, PowHERful.

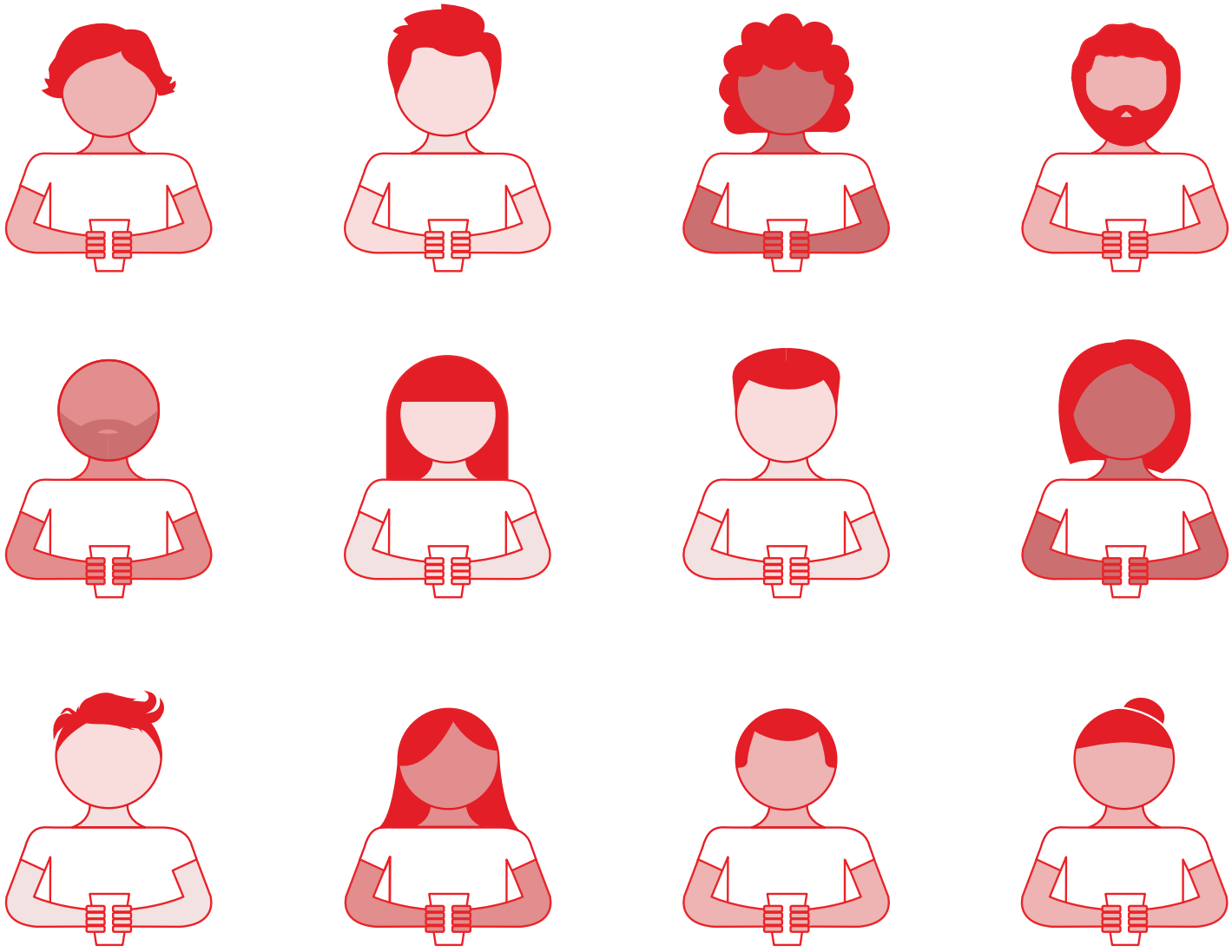
It's going great. Every year we send about 25 girls to and through school. We have a young woman who got her Ph.D. in nursing, and another one of our scholars got her degree in law at Berkeley. This year we'll have three more people graduate, and one of our scholars got two job offers from IBM. I love what we've done, I like that it's small and hands-on, so I know every single person and I feel like I'm very personally committed to help them.

I just watched your BET special, "American Injustice." A lot of your reporting touches on such weighty issues, and yet you seem like such an optimist.

I get what you're saying. It's certainly not the same as when I would cover a disaster. You really feel emotionally wrecked when you come home from a tsunami or an earthquake because you've seen so much devastation. Realistically, the world is full of tough things. I don't know that that has any bearing on whether or not I'm optimistic. My parents both just died in the last 45 days. I'm sad about losing them, but I'm still optimistic.

I think you are the ultimate in resilience.

I lost my luggage on Sunday; I was headed to Phoenix for an award but with no clothes. Then I went to Los Angeles with no clothes, and then I went to Boston with no clothes, and then I came to D.C. today with no clothes, except for stuff that I picked up in the gift shop. I don't feel particularly resilient. I got on my flight to Los Angeles and I was so overwhelmed and tired and upset, and I started to cry. I had my moment, I made my list, and I was lucky because there was a gift shop where I was able to buy stuff, and it was good enough. A lot of times, it's less resilience and more just being flexible. Cry, kick the wall, be unhappy, then get out your pad and make your list. ■



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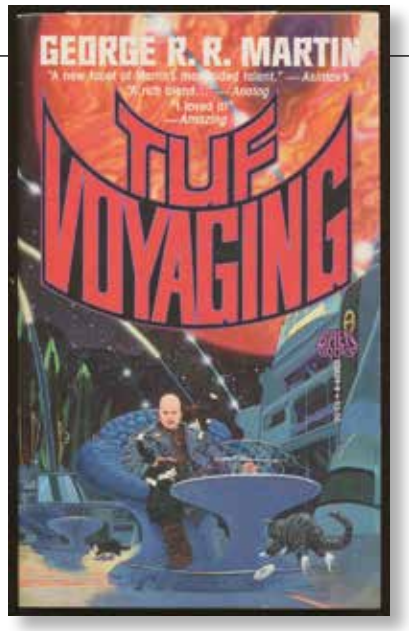

Tuf Voyaging

Fans of *Game of Thrones* and cat people will want to bookmark this throwback 1986 book by George R.R. Martin as a must-indulge summer read.

PARENT REVIEW

Tuf Voyaging is a serialized novel set in the far distant future that chronicles the adventures of Haviland Tuf, who stands over 8 feet tall, has pasty white skin, speaks in a stilted, formal manner, has no sense of humor, and prefers the company of cats to humans.

Authored by George R.R. Martin of *Game of Thrones* fame, this collection of stories is a fun and entertaining read, with Martin's sardonic sense of humor reflected in Tuf's quirky personality, unintentional sarcasm, and most importantly, love of cats. In fact, the cats play important roles in the book, providing a kind of bemused background that gives readers permission not to take it too seriously. (Cat people: You're going to like this book.)

The saga begins when Tuf, an independent trader, joins forces with a group of scoundrels who hire him and his ship, the Cornucopia of Excellent Goods at Low Prices, to find a "seedship," a spaceship 30 kilometers long that was developed by the now-defunct Federal Empire thousands of years earlier as a bioweapon. The seedship, known as the Ark, is one of the most devastating weapons ever created, but it's also one of the most valuable—containing the most advanced biogenetic science in the galaxy.

Once they find the Ark, the group begins a deadly fight for control of the massive ship, with Tuf caught in the crossfire. Though outnumbered and outgunned, Tuf uses guile and cunning to defeat and kill the scoundrels and acquire the Ark. Now in control of the Ark, Tuf becomes an ecological engineer for hire, using the Ark to save planets facing ecological or biological disasters and enriching himself in the process.

The stories revolve around each planet and Tuf's solution to its ecological or biological disaster, which leaves the inhabitants unsatisfied because of Tuf's demanding terms and annoying personality. In the end, the reader is faced with the moral question that dominates the stories: Do the ends justify the means?

Marty Elgison is a retired attorney and avid reader of science fiction old and new.

TEEN REVIEW

Tuf Voyaging is a collection of individual stories following space explorer Haviland Tuf, a quirky and somewhat antisocial trader-turned-ecological-engineer who really likes cats. Each story sees Tuf using his newfound seedship called the Ark—which just happens to be one of the biggest and most powerful vessels in the galaxy—to help people of different planets, usually with some hidden ulterior motive.

Each of the seven stories explores Tuf's initially unreadable personality in different ways. This character pretty much carries the entire book on his own, and he is essentially the only character that the reader is really meant to invest in. With a story centered so heavily on one character, that character must be compelling. And while Tuf doesn't exactly exhibit many of the traits of a traditional sci-fi protagonist, he is one of the most unique and cleverly written characters of any book I've ever read. Though his deadpan personality and lack of proficiency with metaphors, sarcasm, and human emotion may initially be a turnoff for some, it makes for some incredibly clever and witty dialogue and a great use of ironic humor throughout the book.

One of my favorite interactions is when one character, angry with someone else, tells Tuf that she would like to give them a "good piece of her mind"—and Tuf responds, with no hint of snark or sarcasm, "A good piece of your mind might be considered an oxymoron." This one line encompasses Tuf's personality almost perfectly, and despite the fact that he was not attempting to be humorous in any way, it nearly made me laugh out loud.

This book definitely isn't for everyone, but it is an extremely entertaining read that offers a unique take on the science fiction genre, so I would recommend it to any sci-fi fan. If nothing else, read it for the cats.

Olivia is a sophomore at North Atlanta High School in Atlanta, Georgia.

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THE EVOLVING TEENAGE BRAIN

Knowing about brain development can help teens relax—and grow.

By **Nancy Schatz Alton**

When high school freshman Bodhi Zick snaps at his mom or is rude to a friend, he has an unusual perspective that helps him manage these frustrations and mistakes: Thanks to his mom Yvonne-Monique Aviva, a parenting coach, Zick remembers that his brain is currently under construction.

Like a typical kitchen remodel, this brain "remodel" takes longer than you might expect, lasting from puberty's onset through the mid-to-late 20s. Aviva, founder of Seattle-based Parent Tool School and a parenting speaker for numerous school districts, corporations, and nonprofits, has found that teens respond to insights about how their brain development is interacting with their everyday experiences and emotions.

Zick has learned from Aviva that while his mind's prefrontal cortex, or planning center, is being remodeled, his amygdala—an early warning system for the brain—is often in charge. "It helps to know that the amygdala triggers the fight-or-flight response. Sometimes I'll snap at my mom and she'll say, 'Wow, that's quite the response your amygdala is sending!'" says Zick.

Knowing It's Normal

While his mother's comments can lead to eyerolls, he's glad for her expertise. "I like putting a name to what is happening," he says. "Then I can identify what I'm feeling and access what I can do to either calm down or feel better. If I'm stressed, picking up the guitar for five minutes can help me relax."

While no parent wants more eyerolls directed their way, Aviva finds that keeping brain development in mind can help parents and teens weather the storms of intense behavior. That's why she includes this information when she teaches life skills and substance abuse prevention to teenagers and their caregivers.

"Normalizing what's happening through sharing knowledge gives kids agency and autonomy," says Aviva. "It's in a teen's job description to be messy, more irritable and reactive, and less patient than adults with fully constructed brains. It's good for them to know they aren't personally flawed."

For teens, it can be reassuring to know that not everything their brain thinks is a crisis is actually a crisis.

Images of a Changing Brain

When Aviva talks about the adolescent brain at presentations with teens and parents, she offers these visual representations to illustrate her points:

- **A tree with branches that have gone crazy.** All the neural connections that developed before adolescence are being reshaped. The connections that don't get used are pruned, and the connections that are actively engaged may remain. The teen years are a good time to follow interests and learn new skills—and to be intentional about how to spend time and energy.

- **A fire-alarm amygdala.** The amygdala is designed to keep adolescents safe while the prefrontal cortex is developing. But it often sends false alarms. For teens, it can be reassuring to know that not everything their brain thinks is a crisis is actually a crisis.

- **A jungle with no pathways, symbolizing millions of neural pathways.** Every time teenagers learn something new—and between school and everyday life, they often do—they're breaking new ground and creating circuitry that they'll use for the rest of their life. That's complicated, messy work—and it can help teens to know that we don't expect the work of being a teen to be easy, but we have confidence that they're capable.

Parental Support

While this brain development happens, parents can think of themselves as coaches or partners, says Kevin Haggerty, a professor who specializes in prevention programs at the University of Washington School of Social Work in Seattle.

"That means approaching their problems without judgment.Their teenage brains are primed to seek rewards, yet the prefrontal cortex, the critical thinking part of the brain, isn't as fully developed," says Haggerty. "We want our teens to know that they aren't the problem, but they may *have* a problem. I like to say there's no problem so big that it can't be solved."

For example, if they forget Tuesday is their night to make the family dinner, ask them how they'd like you to help remind them of this fact. This coaching technique can also be valuable before things go wrong. "That means helping them think through consequences and practicing difficult situations with them in advance," says Haggerty. "Say, 'Let's talk about the things that can happen when you're out on Friday night.'"

By practicing critical thinking skills with them, he adds, their brains can build neurons that help them make good decisions in the future. Knowing that their brain is still developing can be a twofold reassurance to teens: *I can't help it that my brain is not yet fully developed* and, even more hopefully, *I can affect the way my brain grows.* ■

Teen Loves Broadway Music. Mom Worries That This Hurts Her Social Life.

The music of "Carpool Karaoke," the Broadway episode, fills the car. The four passengers, all seasoned theater performers, identify "Seasons of Love" by the first chord with matching sighs.

That car ride would be my daughter's dream, a picture of her adult life—but it's not the reality. For now, she's content to sing alone. On every morning ride with me, she belts out songs from "South Pacific," "Funny Girl," "Hamilton," "Mean Girls," and a hundred other shows. She finds joy and meaning in the four-part harmonies of Broadway.

Meanwhile, her non-theater friends are downloading Billie Eilish, talking about concert dates, and laughing over lyrics. Lines from songs become catchphrases and inside jokes. The problem with inside jokes? Someone is always left on the outside. What if her wholesale rejection of pop music limits her shared experiences with friends, both now and in the future? What if she's missing out on her generation's cultural touchstone, their version of MTV, George Michael, or New Kids on the Block?

I'm worried over nothing, she says. Every teen problem can be distilled down to a Broadway lyric, and her friends appreciate the perspective she brings to everyday problems by spouting lyrics from musicals (which were occasionally written in 1957). She believes that her friends should, and do, love her as she is, quirky musical taste and all. They love her because of her ability to bring Broadway into the everyday, not in spite of it. And that's an ending fit for a Broadway star.

Beth Swanson is a freelance writer in Washington state. She writes about parenting and life with a hidden disability. Follow her on Twitter at @write4chocolate.

I always choose to listen to Broadway music in the car, while my mom wants me to listen to more modern music. I think that she should let me listen to Broadway because it makes me happy. It's not that modern music is bad; it's just I prefer Broadway, where there is at least one song for every emotion.

My mom's argument is that I need to be able to connect with my friends over music, but I think that my friends understand my taste in music, and that they aren't going to shun me because of it. My friends don't have to like the same music as me: We still like the same sports and movies, and we agree on deeper things like human rights. My friends like me for who I am, and I don't need to connect with them only through music.

Broadway is a huge part of my life, and while I know that my mom isn't trying to get rid of it, I just wish that she could see that it is the soundtrack to my life. I don't want to have to change a part of myself to have people like me more, just like I don't want other people to change the things they like about themselves for me. We all bring something special to a friendship, whether it is different taste in music, a sunny personality, or a unique way of seeing things.

Natalie Swanson is a 13-year-old in Washington State. She enjoys dance and singing, as well as playing soccer and skiing. She would love to be on Broadway someday.

Beth and Natalie turn the stereotype of an angsty middle schooler on its head. More often, I see young teens suppressing any trait that makes them different from their peers, while their parents urge them to embrace their quirks. I advise those parents to fly their "freak flag," model nonconformity and reassure their child that whatever makes them "weird" is probably their secret superpower.

That advice is not needed here. Natalie is a 13-year-old with enough self-awareness to know what brings her joy, and she has the confidence to pursue nontraditional interests.

Beth, you've clearly given your daughter the gift of authenticity. I think you appreciate her approach to life, too, but need some reassurance. I hereby give you permission to stop worrying! Your protectiveness is misplaced. Whenever you hear that nagging inner voice, I want you to ask yourself, "Whose anxiety is this?" Rather than shield Natalie from social rejection, use that mental energy to congratulate yourself on raising a daughter who "brings Broadway into the everyday" and knows how to choose nonjudgmental friends who appreciate her uniqueness.

Meanwhile, I promise that Natalie's non-theater friends have their own weirdness, too. And with each belted lyric of "Seasons of Love," Natalie will embolden them to be their true selves, too.

Phyllis L. Fagell, LCPC, is the school counselor at Sheridan School in Washington, D.C., a therapist at the Chrysalis Group in Bethesda, Maryland, and the author of Middle School Matters *(August 2019). She blogs at phyllisfagell.com and tweets at @pfagell.*

Want to share your story? Email your idea to editor@yourteenmag.com.

Photos by **Beth Segal**

HOW TO MOTIVATE TEEN BOYS? CONSIDER SAYING YES TO RISK.

Adults often inadvertently quash boys' motivation. Here's a novel way to bring it back.

By Jennifer L.W. Fink

As the mother of four sons and the founder of a website, online community, and podcast about raising boys, I hear a lot of tales from the trenches. One common worry of parents of sons is that their tween and teen boys just don't seem to be motivated. Instead, they describe sons who "aren't interested in anything" and complain about their boys' lack of engagement with life. And compared to boys of ages past—who fought wars while still in their teens or helped support their families with their labor—today's video-game-playing, couch-sitting, device-connected boys can look pretty apathetic.

What's Going on with Boys and Young Men?

Of course, some boys are doing great. But many boys' lack of motivation can be striking, especially when compared to girls' achievement. Despite ongoing worries about girls' mental health (the self-harm

rate among teen girls, for example, has risen sharply in recent years) and boys' dominance in STEM fields, statistics paint a picture that raises concerns about boys' chances for adult success.

Here's why: Boys are less likely to graduate from high school and less likely to attend college than girls. According to recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 66.9 percent of recent male high school graduates are enrolled in college, compared to 71.3 percent of female high school grads. Men are also less likely than women to earn an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree.

Girls are also more likely than boys to work during high school and college, and those additional years of job experience combined with more advanced education may explain why more young men are tumbling to the bottom of the income ladder (according to census data). And it may also help to explain why, according to Pew Research, men ages 18-34 are more likely to live with their parents than their female counterparts, a trend that's more common among less-educated adults.

Can-Do Kids

At the opposite end of the spectrum are boys like Luke Thill, who built his first house—an 87-square foot tiny home located in his parents' backyard—before he turned 13. Now 16, he regularly speaks at gatherings of tiny-house enthusiasts and is preparing to build his second home. He hasn't yet graduated from high school, so no one can say for sure what Luke will do in his young-adult years, but he is full of enthusiasm and motivation and has already developed highly marketable skills in construction, communication, and problem-solving.

Ben and Bean Garner are also actively pursuing their passions and interests. Ben, age 14, built a homemade metal foundry so he could create casted metal projects; his brother, Bean, age 11, races junior dragsters—scaled-down versions of full-sized drag racing cars that still go scary fast. Maxx Ketteler, age 10, also spends hours mastering difficult skills. A trampoline trick enthusiast, Maxx routinely jumps off a 15-foot tower onto a trampoline to nail quadruple backflips.

Each of these boys is independently setting and working toward goals. And each of these confident, engaged, motivated boys is engaged in activities that are beyond what most people consider appropriate or safe. Could risk-taking be the common denominator here, the missing link between boys and motivation? Is risk—and parents' ability to tolerate it—the key to increasing boys' motivation?

The Importance of Risk-Taking in Adolescence

According to behavioral economics, risk involves engaging in a behavior with an uncertain outcome. Generally speaking, teenagers are more tolerant of ambiguity than adults, and that's by design, according to Natasha Duell, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow at UNC-Chapel Hill's Center for Developmental Science.

"Adolescence is a period when young people are supposed to try things," says Daniel Romer, Ph.D., director of the Adolescent Communication Institute at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Compared to adults, teenagers worldwide exhibit what Romer calls "heightened attraction to novel and exciting experiences despite their evident risk." But while it's easy to bemoan teenagers' immature brains, Romer and others suspect that this innate inclination helps children test and refine their burgeoning capabilities.

In other words, risk-taking can be a positive feature of adolescence, rather than a problem that needs to be fixed or eliminated.

Researchers know that dopamine, a potent neurochemical, is released when we take a risk and experience an

unexpected reward. Because dopamine triggers feelings of satisfaction and elation, people who successfully take one risk may be more likely to take another.

Kayt Sukel, author of *The Art of Risk: The New Science of Courage, Caution, & Chance*, noticed this cumulative effect after she and her husband began allowing their then-middle schoolers to ride their bikes to school independently. "They gained a lot of confidence in their own abilities," says Sukel. "It seems like a silly thing, but navigating by themselves every day motivated them to take on other things."

We don't yet have specific data showing that allowing boys more healthy risk-taking would directly improve their educational and young adult outcomes, but one thing is clearly promising: It does tend to build momentum in adolescents.

How Parental Fears Squelch Motivation

Allowing children the freedom to pursue goals of their own choosing—and giving them the space to fail, learn, and adapt—is one way we can build their competence and autonomy. To grow, children need to regularly engage in opportunities with uncertain outcomes—in other words, risky activities.

Of course, we parents don't want our kids harmed emotionally or physically. When they ask to ride their bikes to school, we fear a car or bike accident. When they express a desire to build a house or melt metal, we worry about power tools and burns. And we know that we can avoid the worst possible outcomes by simply saying no. (Of course, the risk doesn't *have* to be extreme or physical. Trying out for a team or play is taking a risk. So is starting a YouTube channel or asking a classmate to a dance.)

What we often fail to realize is the potentially far-reaching impact of those nos. When Michael C. Reichert, Ph.D., author of *How to Raise a Boy*, recently spent time with his 2½ year old grandson, all the boy wanted to do was jump off the furniture. The child pulled himself onto the couch, climbed onto the arm, and then leapt off the back of the couch onto a bean bag on the floor, over and over again.

"What I perceived is what we call the drive for mastery and competence," says Reichert, a psychologist and executive director of the Center for the Study of Boys' and Girls' Lives. "He's using his body and discovering what it can do, and it's enormously interesting and reinforcing to him. Now, if I project my fears or worries onto him and allow myself to control the situation, essentially substituting my judgment for his, he gets the message that he has to operate within my parameters and that what he wants and who he is aren't important."

Boys, in particular, frequently receive this message from parents and educators. In our well-intentioned desire to raise good, caring, civilized men, many of us are quick to kibosh loud, active, and physically risky behavior. Unfortunately, we may also be stunting our children's growth.

When to Worry:

If your son...

- Isn't motivated to participate in activities he usually loves
- Expresses hopelessness
- Engages in increasingly risky behaviors, such as excessive drinking or unwise driving, despite negative outcomes
- Has an excessive amount of energy and believes he can do anything
- Is sleeping much more or less than usual

"Parents' need to protect their child can lead to an excessive level of monitoring, which may minimize adolescents' opportunities to be themselves, explore their environments, and try new things," says UNC's Duell.

In other words, we can run a different sort of risk—the risk of extinguishing a boy's spirit.

How to Build Motivation

True motivation comes from within. Ultimately, you want your son to trust himself. You want him to set and work toward goals. You can help him discover or regain his motivation by respecting his desires and helping him achieve his goals, no matter how silly or insignificant they might seem to you. Here's how:

DON'T INSTANTLY GO TO NO.

That's 11-year-old Bean Garner's advice for parents, and it's a great tip. Instead, ask questions. (*Why* do you want to use the circular saw?) If his answers are reasonable—and he knows how to safely engage in the activity—say yes.

If you don't know much about the proposed activity, educate yourself. "Watch a couple of videos on it," Garner says. You can also talk to other informed adults. Got a kid who wants to play rugby? Go watch a match and chat with the coach afterward.

PROVIDE "TRAINING WHEELS."

Training wheels allow children to gradually learn balance, while developing the confidence and skills they need to ride safely. So, provide your son with necessary safety equipment. Teach him how to safely use tools and materials. (If you don't possess the necessary skills, find an older teen or adult who can mentor him.) Insist on direct supervision until you're confident in his abilities.

LET THEM MAKE MISTAKES.

"I made plenty of mistakes during my build that I know my dad could have probably prevented, but making and learning from those mistakes was a big thing," says Luke Thill, the tiny-home builder.

What about Girls?

Girls, on the whole, gravitate toward less physically risky behavior than boys do. So if risk-taking is healthy—and it is—then why are girls doing better in certain outcomes, such as education and young adult independence?

We can theorize that the *fit* of the risk with the child is important, too. Non-physical risks like taking a challenging class or running for student government are applauded in a modern school environment—but not all boys and girls thrive in these activities. Energetic girls may need sports or other physical activities to exercise their risk muscle, just as many boys do. Similarly, many boys do thrive on the kinds of risk that are rewarded in school and desk jobs, and they may have no aptitude for adrenaline-fueled activities.

"Factors such as life experience—whether or not an adolescent has had a positive or negative experience with a particular behavior or category of behaviors—is going to influence their willingness to pursue a risk," says Natasha Duell, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow at UNC-Chapel Hill's Center for Developmental Science. "Personality traits such as anxiety or shyness also may influence how approach- or avoidance-oriented a child is."

In the end, it's about knowing each child individually.

Luke's dad, Greg, purposefully allowed Luke space to make mistakes. "I might have my own ideas of how a task should be completed, but that doesn't always mean I'm right," Greg Thill says. "I let him take his own approach as long as it was done safely."

As a parent, your job is to "give your kids opportunities to learn and grow—and if they mess up, be that soft-ish place to land," Sukel says. That means responding to mistakes with empathy and curiosity, rather than judgment and shame. "Use it as an opportunity to talk to them," Sukel says, rather than reverting to lines like, *what were you thinking?*

Encourage reflection by saying something like, "I can understand why in the moment this seemed like a good idea, but what do you think you could have done differently? What have you learned from this?"

BE HIS ALLY.

Find ways to facilitate your son's interests. As a young boy, Luke Thill loved rock climbing, so when his family went on vacation, his parents made it a point to visit rock-climbing gyms.

When you help your son meet his needs, you build trust and connection, and connection is crucial to boys' success. According to Reichert, boys who do not feel connected to their teachers often refuse to work and become resentful or disruptive, while boys who feel seen and understood by their teachers are willing to work hard.

"Boys are perhaps even more fragile than girls when it comes to connection," Reichert says. "Girls often persist, despite weak connections. Boys, if they don't have a connection, aren't likely to dig in."

TRUST HIM.

Your son knows his mind and body better than anyone. Judi Ketteler uses that knowledge to calm her nerves when her 10-year-old son leaps off a 15-foot tower onto a trampoline in an attempt to do potentially back-breaking tricks.

"I remind myself, 'This is who he is,'" Ketteler says. "I just have to trust that he knows his body and what it can do." ■

TEEN SPEAK

School Isn't Everything to Me. But I Have Goals.

A lot of girls I have gone to school with prioritize grades over everything else. I know that school matters, but there are a lot of other things that matter, or that I enjoy a lot more. I try to put a lot of my energy towards being successful in school, but school is not everything to me. I feel a lack of motivation does ring true for me; a lot of the time, I just don't feel motivated to try my hardest in school. I'm not sure why, but there are just a lot of things that matter a lot more to me: sports, friends, having fun. I just am more motivated to do things I enjoy than things I don't.

I feel like the main reason that teenage guys are behind in a lot of ways is because girls show how they feel a lot. A lot of us guys don't care or express ourselves as much. As a guy, I've just always grown up thinking that crying is bad. I never really open up about how I feel about a lot of things because it seems like they don't really matter.

But I feel like I do take a lot of risks and try new things—like trying new sports or making foods that I haven't tried before. I try to be more independent so that I don't need my parents to do things for me and I can do things for myself. My parents support me with a lot of risks I take that help make me more independent and helpful, and a lot of decisions I make about taking risks are based on what my parents would think of it.

Even though I'm not working my hardest at school right now, I feel confident and motivated about the future because I want to be successful when I am older. I want to get a job that I enjoy so that I don't waste my life having a 9 to 5 office job that I dread. I want to do something that I genuinely enjoy for the rest of my life that also makes a good living.

Aidan Turos just completed his freshman year of high school. He enjoys baseball, soccer, swimming, and running.

How much failure is too much?

When kids take a more precipitous drop than we're prepared for, how much do we let them fail before we jump in?

By Adrienne Wichard-Edds

By the middle of my younger son's eighth grade year, I stopped checking his grades. His report cards remained unopened on the dining room table. This wasn't because I didn't care or because I already knew what was in there. It's because I finally realized that the more I fretted and pressed him about his grades, the less he was able to take ownership over his own academic performance.

This was a bold move for me, and a decision I didn't make lightly. I already knew that some level of allowing my kids to fail was essential to their development. Jessica Lahey's book *The Gift of Failure* came out the year my sons were in fourth and sixth grades, and it was a revelation. You mean I shouldn't ferry a forgotten lunchbox to school? Micromanage school projects to ensure they measure up? The concept of allowing my kids to make mistakes—and learn from them—was both liberating and terrifying.

"Resist the urge to save your kid," Lahey told me in an interview. "Remember that saving the kid sometimes makes the mom feel better than the kid. Are you doing this for Good Mommy Points or for their best interests?"

As my younger boy slipped from early adolescence into teenagerhood, I could see how my eager efforts to "help" had caused him to push me away in a much-needed bid for independence. And after several semesters of parenting failures of

my own, I decided to hand the reins over to my more-than-competent kid, with the caveat that I would help him make sure he had the time and space to complete all his work, and that any weekend social plans were contingent upon having all his work turned in.

Why Not Rescue?

"In order to do well, kids need to feel three things: connectedness, autonomy, and competence," says William Stixrud, a clinical psychologist and co-author of *The Self-Driven Child*. "When parents jump in, the message they send their kid is *you need me to manage your life*, which deprives them of the latter two."

Author and school consultant Ana Homayoun, who has written three books on parenting tweens and teens, including *Social Media Wellness*, agrees that swooping in whenever something doesn't go as planned socially, academically, or extracurricularly will backfire in the long run. "This deprives the child of the opportunity to learn how to be resourceful and problem-solve," says Homayoun. If they forget their homework and there's no parent to rush it to school, they may realize, *oh, there's a saved version I can print out in the library.*

It's Hard to Back Off

Why do we parents have such a hard time letting our kids take the reins, even on low-stakes responsibilities? "Much of the time, the fear of failure is really rooted in parents' subconscious views of children's achievement as a reflection of their parenting—which it isn't," says Homayoun. But when parents feel that way, "the pain of every social blunder or athletic disappointment becomes that much more amplified."

Stixrud acknowledges that a low sense of control is one of the most stressful things anyone can experience. "As parents, sitting on your hands is about as stressful as it gets," he says. "So when kids aren't doing well, our first impulse is to clamp down on them. But it doesn't motivate them."

Can failure go too far, though?

When to Step In

When you notice your child forgetting to feed their fish, do you let the animal suffer because of your kid's failings? The temptation might be to throw up your hands at this whole "gift of failure thing" and bark at your kid to *feed the fish, already!* or to just resentfully feed the fish yourself.

Stepping in is appropriate here, but Stixrud suggests that if you start from a place of empathy rather than frustration, you're more likely to find a solution. "Maybe you say to them, 'Should we talk about finding you a different chore?'"

If the child doesn't care enough to look after the pet, then maybe they aren't ready for that kind of responsibility, says Stixrud. If they want to keep trying to care for the animal, then it's okay to offer help and allow the child to take you up on it. "You might say, 'You seem overwhelmed. Is there some way that I can help you? I know you don't want that fish to die'—or whatever negative consequence is involved," he says. "But try to avoid using fear to motivate kids."

When you notice your child forgetting to feed their fish, do you let the animal suffer because of your kid's failings?

Parents also need to step in, says Homayoun, when kids struggle with executive functioning skills—planning, organizing, and prioritizing—but by supporting them, not doing the work for them. "A child who struggles with executive functioning skills often needs structure and support so they can build their own toolbox and ultimately do it on their own," she says. "If they don't, that feeling of overwhelm can lead to toxic, rather than manageable, stress."

It's a balance, she says. "A parent who does too much doesn't allow the child to develop the skills for themselves, and the parent who doesn't provide support as a child flounders is also not helping the child move forward in their growth and development."

Stixrud also points out that when a kid is depressed, addicted (to substances or technology), or in denial about the consequences of their performance, jumping in to help is justified. "The limit for me is if a kid can't think straight," he says. "Depression, addiction, denial all contribute to that. If you find yourself thinking that you can't live with yourself if you don't do something to help them, then do it. Offer support, but don't force it on them." ■

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Mixed Signals

My Mom Is Okay with Teens Having Sex. So Why Can't My Boyfriend Share My Bed?

TEEN

By Jaden Jones

My boyfriend and I started dating in eighth grade and have been together for two years. To many adults, this is astonishing. All my friends who are in relationships have also been with their partner for at least six months, another supposedly astonishing fact. My friends and I constantly feel that adults refuse to take us or our relationships seriously or treat us as equals.

My parents are very open to talking about sex and consent, and they've made my household a very sex-positive environment. However, when my boyfriend started going on overnight vacations with my family starting about eight months into our relationship, my mother made it very clear we were never allowed to sleep in the same bed. I haven't had much of an issue with this rule, as I merely enjoy the presence of my significant other. But I also challenge the rhetoric and belief that lies behind it, because of course I would one day love to have the privilege of sharing a bed with him.

My mother's first instinct was to argue that "a bed should only be shared during marriage, or when you're married. It's... like... a marital bed!" While she thought this was strong reasoning, I mostly wanted to guffaw. She herself has agreed that marriage is a social construct, and she readily advocates for the practice of cohabitation that all her Swedish friends take part in. And in no

way do I want to live with my boyfriend at this age—we simply would like to try sleeping side by side. Even psychologists have found that sharing a bed with your loved one increases intimacy and happiness, improves sleep, and decreases the risks of depression and anxiety.

I could understand her discomfort if she was heavily against people our age having sex, but she isn't. Besides, not a single teen I know would try to have sex while their parents are sleeping just a few feet away. So what is the harm in our sleeping next to each other, if the harm doesn't come from sex?

Jaden Jones is a sophomore in high school and enjoys theater, dance, and travel blogging on www.middleschooldropoutblog.wordpress.com in her free time.

PARENT

By Kim Kraft-Jones

My husband and I consider ourselves relatively liberal parents. When it comes to talking about relationships and sex with our 16-year-old daughter, we are both committed to having open communication, remaining supportive, and being open-minded. We talk about safe sex and informed decision-making, and we try to avoid a lot of the negative messaging that we grew up with that often led to associating sex with shame or fear. Inspired by Peggy Orenstein's book, *Girls and Sex*, as well as in response to the #MeToo movement, we have talked to our daughter and her boyfriend about "enthusiastic consent," and we have tried to give them space while still maintaining some boundaries.

This is uncharted water for us, so sometimes (usually) we make up the rules as we go along. For example, while we have told our daughter that we respect her and think she is mature enough to make her own decisions regarding relationships, we do not allow her to be home alone with her boyfriend or to close the bedroom door if they are hanging out. And when we invite him on overnight trips, we require that they sleep in separate beds.

I am not really sure myself why we have these specific rules; instinctively, it feels like good parenting, but, maybe ironically, I am the one who is influenced by societal norms. None of my American friends would ever let their kids sleep with their boyfriends, but several of my Swedish friends are much more open to the idea. In fact, way back in the early '90s, when I was an exchange student in Sweden at age 17, my host sister often had her boyfriend stay the night.

I can see (and our daughter points out) that our rules sometimes contradict our messaging around respect for her right to be sex-positive and explore her sexual identity. At one point I even tried to justify that I thought of the bed as marital space, but that is not really in line with anything I believe. The bottom line might just be that I have my limits of comfort with witnessing my daughter grow into a woman, and for now, those limits include not waking up in my hotel room next to her in bed with her boyfriend.

This is uncharted water for us, so sometimes (usually) we make up the rules as we go along.

Kim Kraft is an academic adviser and Swedish instructor at the University of Washington. In her free time, she loves planning her future travels but also enjoys spending time with family and friends near her home in the Pacific Northwest.

EXPERT

By Dr. Sanam Hafeez

Jaden, I know it can be confusing to reconcile your mom being sex-positive with what you are hearing from her about the idea of sharing a bed with your boyfriend. In the end, though, this situation is about what your mother is comfortable with letting you experience at your age. It is not about what she believes in general.

Kim, even though your views may be liberal in terms of teen sex, it is okay for us to worry and concern ourselves with the emotional and physical bonds our children develop with their boyfriends or girlfriends. As a responsible and loving parent, there should be no remorse in delineating your rules for your child.

Here are some simple things to keep in mind when approaching this conversation:

Don't be overly authoritative. Teens are often in the fast lane of hormonal and psychological growth, and they may become infatuated with the idea of independence. They can feel frustration that they can't

yet do everything they want to do. At the same time, parents are in the tricky spot of enforcing rules without letting rules divide them from their children.

It doesn't help to come at this conversation with a rigid and forceful tone. "My house, my rules!" or "I am the parent, and you are the child!" These types of phrases can ramp up tension in the conversation and ultimately interfere with the child understanding the purpose of those rules.

Share personal experiences and lessons. Being open and vulnerable with your teenager can help them relate to you more and understand your point. Sharing anecdotes and lessons that you have learned in your own life can help them see that you are making informed decisions about the restrictions you place on them—and that ultimately, you want them to have great experiences without growing up too fast.

Being open and vulnerable with your teenager can help them relate to you more and understand your point.

If both mother and daughter can look at this situation as a journey of understanding between the two, it could allow for vulnerability without judgment and even the potential for a closer mother-daughter relationship.

Be firm but trusting. Many parents feel that even after they have difficult conversations with their child, they have to hover over them in case the teen attempts to break any rules. In this case, I would suggest cautiously trusting your teen. It is not a good feeling for the teen to have difficult conversations and understand why certain rules are in place—and then still not be trusted or allowed to spend time with their crush without scoldings or warnings. Trust them and be vigilant, but most importantly be there for your child with open arms.

Dr. Sanam Hafeez, Psy.D., is a New York City-based licensed clinical psychologist, teaching faculty member at the Columbia University Teacher's College, and the founder and clinical director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, P.C.

Celiac Disease

Approximately 1% of the U.S. population has celiac disease. But some people have gastrointestinal symptoms without having celiac disease, and some have celiac disease but few symptoms. How can you tell what's going on with your teenager? *Your Teen* asked Dr. Jeremiah Levine, chief of pediatric gastroenterology at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York, for answers and advice.

What is celiac disease?
Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder caused by eating gluten—a group of proteins found in wheat, barley, and rye. Some patients will have abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, gas, and other nonspecific gastric complaints after eating foods that contain gluten. The major concerns arise when these kids are eating but losing weight, feeling bad, and are unable to function. But that is relatively atypical. What we see most commonly are celiac patients who look and feel perfectly healthy and have only mild, nonspecific complaints.

How is a diagnosis made?
A positive diagnosis requires four criteria: (1) some symptoms; (2) an abnormal blood test; (3) an endoscopy which confirms inflammation in the small intestine; and (4) treatment which alleviates symptoms, confirmed by a blood test which shows improvement. If there is any question about any part of steps 1-4, then making a diagnosis can become problematic. If there is a positive diagnosis, then we sit down and discuss long-term implications and eliminating gluten from the diet.

For asymptomatic celiac patients, why is eliminating gluten important?
There are long-term issues and complications associated with celiac disease. It's much easier to make a diagnosis

at age 3 or 4 when parents can make necessary dietary changes and a child simply grows up that way. But with an adolescent who doesn't have symptoms—or they are minimal—and they aren't suffering, it can be very challenging. It's difficult to convince an adolescent who generally feels fine that lifestyle changes have to be made to avoid problems 10 or 20 years down the road, especially when they generally feel fine.

Celiac is not like having an allergy to milk where maybe you can find out how much milk you tolerate before you get hives or stomach cramps. I always say it's like being pregnant: You are, or you aren't—you can't be a little bit pregnant. It's an all-or-nothing thing. The long-term risks of celiac disease include other autoimmune diseases such as thyroid disease, diabetes, and the elevated risk of intestinal cancer. And you can't delay a gluten-free diet until you have developed diabetes—you can't undo diabetes once you have it.

What role do parents have in overseeing a teenager's diet?

From ages 11-13, parents are the major enforcers of the gluten-free diet and have almost complete responsibility for eliminating risks. But by age 14 and older, parents increasingly have less control over what their children do. At home, parents can generally control risk and eliminate exposure to gluten and cross-contamination. But outside of the home, at friends' houses, school, parties, etc., kids have a much harder time sticking to a gluten-free diet. Parents have limited control over adolescents generally, so getting them to buy into the notion that this is to prevent long-term complications can be challenging. We're thrilled if they realize that eating things they shouldn't makes them feel bad, and they want to avoid feeling bad. But this can be a very subtle disease, and teens who want the immediate satisfaction of eating pizza with their friends (when it doesn't make them feel especially bad) have to remember that there are long-term complications. That's what we are trying to avoid.

Having celiac disease is not at all the same as deciding not to eat gluten.

How can parents help a child transition to a gluten-free lifestyle?

Involving kids in the grocery shopping and menu planning is effective. Parents can face challenges when one child in a family has celiac, but the others don't. While it's safest to eliminate gluten completely, then you're imposing dietary restrictions on someone who doesn't need it. Most families just try to minimize the cross-contamination and be reasonably on top of what's going on in the kitchen to keep things separate. At NYU Langone, we have a Pediatric Celiac Disease & Gluten-Related Disorders Program for patients which provides grocery guides—so they know which foods to buy and which to avoid—as well as nutritionist-developed recipes for gluten-free living.

Is having celiac disease the same as being gluten-free?

That's actually a real problem right now because being gluten-free is currently in vogue.

Some people have eliminated gluten from their diets just because they feel better, and these people have the luxury of deciding what they can tolerate. They don't tend to be very strict with their consumption of gluten. But this is not an option for celiac patients and does not translate well into the celiac experience. Celiac patients are going to need support and to work closely with a nutritionist and medical providers to make sure they are following a gluten-free diet. Having celiac disease is not at all the same as deciding not to eat gluten. ■

Interview by Jane Parent

Photo by **Beth Segal**

Do You Have a Crush on Anyone?

How to send your kids an inclusive message about love

By **Kate Rope**

The other night my sixth-grader and I were having one of those free-flowing bedtime talks, in which she was open and chatty, and I just tried not to mess it up by saying the wrong thing. She told me middle school had been great so far, and she didn't understand why it got a bad rap.

"I think it gets trickier when hormones start complicating things," I told her. I was about to add, "and boys and girls start having crushes on each other," but I stopped myself. I realized the message I would send if I said those words: that the usual order of business is boys and girls liking one another. And how that might set the stage for any other kind of crush being abnormal.

I had made sure to address sexual preferences, gender identity, and transgender issues as part of "the talk." But until that moment, I hadn't thought about all the smaller messages I may be sending—as a heterosexual parent raised in a heteronormative society—that could end up alienating my kids if their first feelings of love don't resemble the picture I've painted.

A few weeks later on the TV show "This is Us," the oldest daughter of uber-parents Randall and Beth Pearson told them she likes girls. "We love you no matter what," Randall told her, a phrase that is supposed to represent the ultimate in acceptance parenting. Except it's not. It implies that being gay is a negative that can be overcome by love, not something to be loved.

All of this got me thinking: How can heterosexual parents in a heteronormative world make all crushes not only okay, but something to celebrate?

I called up some experts in inclusivity and child psychology to find out.

Here's what I learned:

Use inclusive language

"A great place to start is to lose the gendered pronouns," says Lisa Damour, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls*. If you're talking about a hypothetical future wedding or relationship, opt for spouse or partner instead of husband or wife.

"Language is the most important part," says Jo Langford, author of *The Pride Guide: A Guide to Sexual and Social Health for LGBTQ Youth*. Replace boy or girl with words like somebody or anyone, as in "Do you have a crush on anybody?" Thinking back to my conversation with my daughter, I could have just said, "when kids start having crushes on each other."

Take the initiative

Parents are more and more open to their kids talking to them about issues of gender identity, says Langford, but are still hesitant to start the conversation themselves. "That's hard on kids because it puts the onus of responsibility on them to bring it up."

But when parents start the conversation, kids see their parents as safe people, says Langford. "And if your child is queer, it opens the door because a lot of kids don't know how to broach

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it. We still have that cultural template of waiting until you're coming home from college at Thanksgiving."

Broaden your social circle

Your kids benefit from you being engaged with people different than you, but it's especially important for queer kids growing up in a heteronormative family. "Having close family friends who are LGBTQ and clearly valued and loved by parents sends a strong and unspoken message to kids," says Damour.

Be a culture critic

Whatever your community, the culture at large "presents us with lots of opportunities to share our values," says Damour. When discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity comes up in the news, she says, talk as a family "about the moral wrongness of it and the social obligation to fight against it." Damour watches the new "Queer Eye" TV show with her children and engages them in conversation when the show addresses discrimination.

"We just have to open up our lives and pay attention," agrees Amy Lang, a sex educator in Seattle. "Some people have two-dad families, some people have two-mom families, some people have one-mom families. Let your kids know, 'This is the way people are, too.'"

Be honest

What if you haven't always had an open mind? "If you've left a trail of unhelpful comments that you now realize are degrading or offensive, go back and clean it up," advises Langford. Admitting your mistakes and letting kids see you change and be thoughtful can be hugely beneficial to them.

And it's okay if these conversations are difficult at first. There's a culture of silence around sex that can make it uncomfortable and make you worry about saying the wrong thing. Let your child know you're not totally certain about how to talk about these issues. Chances are your child does.

"Transparency—especially as our kids become adolescents—is really powerful," says Langford, "because it lets them see us as the flawed humans we are and gives them an opportunity to be in the driver's seat, which is great for our relationships." ■

Having close family friends who are LGBTQ and clearly valued and loved by parents sends a strong and unspoken message to kids.

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Photo by **Beth Segal**

THEY'VE GOT MAIL

Teenagers often put email last on their to-do lists. Here's how to help them use this valuable tool.

By Jaimie Seaton

If your teenager starts the day by reaching for their phone, they're not alone. According to a 2018 survey from Pew Research Center, 44% of teens often check their phone as soon as they wake up, while 28% of teens sometimes do. But while they seem to be pretty much connected 24/7, email is seldom the number one priority. It's more likely that they are checking texts or social media messages.

Email is still the primary method of *professional* communication, though—sometimes even for summer jobs. Teenagers need to learn how to use it properly. Most kids will get a school-designated email address in middle school, but at some point they're going to need their own, independent account.

Choose Wisely

It all begins with choosing an email address. An address like *ilovecottoncandy@email.com* might sound cute coming from a child, but teenagers will be using their email to apply to schools and jobs, so it's best to have a professional-sounding address.

Dr. Devorah Heitner, author of *Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World*, suggests using the teen's first and last name @ whatever platform they choose (Gmail is popular), or adding a middle initial or numbers if the name is taken.

How to Draft Emails

Kids are texting ninjas, but that doesn't mean they know how to write an email. There was a time when letter writing was taught in schools. Those days are gone, so it's up to parents to remind their teens that an email is more formal than texting.

"They need to begin with a salutation in most cases—certainly with any teacher or professional communication. 'Hey' is not a good greeting for a teacher or professor," advises Heitner. "*Dear Ms. Smith* for someone you don't know. *Hi Ms. Jackson* could be okay for someone you are in more regular contact with, but you can't go wrong with old-school manners."

She adds that when emailing teachers, students should use their own full names and even the name of the class (there may be other kids with the same first name).

Should Parents Supervise?

Many parents monitor their teen's social media accounts, but should that extend to email? Katie Altemus, a mother from Pennsylvania, says yes. Her 15-year-old son knows that she has access to everything on his phone, including his email account (which they set up together).

"He's well aware that whatever goes out in electronic format can go everywhere, instantly," Altemus says. "I often remind him about my 'full access' status and that it's for his safety. He knows that I will keep his confidence and respect his privacy unless I find something that is a health or safety risk."

Like many kids, Altemus's son isn't a big user of email yet. He only checks it about once a month, unless he's expecting to hear from someone. That's probably why Altemus hasn't yet specifically monitored her son's email account—there's not much going on for now. That will all need to change by the time he's applying to colleges, when he could miss important deadlines and notices with this email-checking schedule.

A Change of Pace

Because of its professional benefits and longer format, email might be one type of screen time parents may want to encourage. One benefit of email is that it can get teens away from constantly texting, says Richard Freed, a child and adolescent psychologist and the author of *Wired Child: Reclaiming Childhood in a Digital Age*.

"It would be helpful to shift kids away from smartphones and social media to communicate with relatives and perhaps a close friend or two via email," Freed says. "This generation of kids, once they hit middle-school age, will benefit from moving away from incessant texting and social media use to emailing a few friends for a little bit during the day."

Grandparents, too, would probably love an email from their teenage grandchild. ■

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A Faster Track to Career Success?

Why a pre-professional college program might be the right path

By **Cathie Ericson**

Greg Robinson, a doctor who lives in Washington, D.C., hoped his son Samuel would follow in his footsteps into the medical field, but not necessarily by taking the same route he did. Instead, he urged Samuel to consider a pre-professional program because, he says, "a more general degree [such as biology or chemistry] doesn't show you're as serious. I took the long route, and I'm still paying for it." Robinson believes the path to becoming a doctor would have happened much more quickly had he chosen the pre-professional route.

Students in a pre-professional track declare their intentions to pursue a professional program in law or a specific area of health care, explains Clare Spathelf, assistant director of pre-professional programs at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Ohio.

"This means that a first-year undergrad is working toward multiple goals; they are transitioning into college while simultaneously preparing for graduate school," says Spathelf.

That was an appealing path for Samuel, who aspires to work with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration doing "something both scientific and creative." With this goal in mind, he worked to align his volunteer experiences, part-time job at the YMCA, and science focus at school with the college's requirements. This diligence helped him stand out and gain acceptance to a pre-professional Doctor of Pharmacy program straight out of high school.

Who Should Consider a Pre-Professional Program?

Students who have a clear idea of their future career are perfect candidates, says Spathelf. She helps oversee students enrolled in the university's pre-professional program, which supports undergraduates pursuing post-baccalaureate programs in dentistry, law, medicine, occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, physician assistant, physical therapy, and veterinary medicine.

Choosing a pre-professional program over a more general degree path can not only put you on a fast track to your intended career, but it can also potentially offer an inside edge on the competition for acceptance into graduate programs, says Joann Elliott of College Counseling Tutoring and author of the book *When to Do What: A Step-by-Step Guide to the College Process*.

Colleges often save a certain number of graduate program slots for their own students, she says. Sometimes students on the pre-professional track can even avoid aspects of the application process that are typically required, such as interviews or admissions tests like the LSAT for law school.

Students in a pre-professional program often receive specialized support as well. For example, BGSU has designated advisors and a one-stop "resource room" that offers test prep materials, guidance with graduate school applications, and help strengthening interviewing skills, says Spathelf.

Five Key Factors to Consider

Wondering if a pre-professional route might be a good fit for your teen? Here's what Spathelf says they look for:

1. High achievers who are very engaged learners
2. Good written and verbal communication skills
3. Aptitude for advanced critical thinking and problem-solving
4. Demonstrated ability to handle the rigor of multitasking
5. Good leadership skills and interest in community service

Going the Extra Mile

"Do your homework on the benchmarks you must attain to be considered by the schools that interest you," Elliott says. She recommends paying special attention to the application process early on, as there might be additional steps for applying to a pre-professional program.

There are a number of ways students can home in on a specific career goal. Many college campuses offer summer programs that give students a taste of fields like law, healthcare, and veterinary medicine. Spathelf also recommends that interested high school students learn more about their chosen field of study by volunteering and shadowing professionals.

That approach helped cement Samuel's path: He engaged with a contact on LinkedIn who holds the type of position he hopes to pursue. That connection kindled a passion in him that shone through in his applications—and confirmed he was on the right track. ■

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Why More Teens Are Starting with Associate Degrees

Community college can save your student a bundle.

By Diana Simeon

For families seeking to fund a bachelor's degree without breaking the bank, here's an increasingly popular strategy: Encourage your student to earn an associate degree at your local community college and then transfer to a four-year institution to complete their bachelor's degree.

The savings can be significant. In 2017-2018, the average annual cost of tuition at a public two-year college was $3,570, according to the College Board. Compare that with $9,970 on average for a public four-year institution or a whopping $34,740 for a private four-year institution. And that's just tuition; it can cost even more with room and board.

"Really, this approach makes all the sense in the world, especially for families who are concerned with affordability," notes Tim Gorrell, executive director of the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority, which manages Ohio's 529 Plan. 529 plans offer families a tax-advantaged way to save for college.

Transfer Partnerships Make It Easy

The good news: Two- and four-year institutions are working together to make it easier than ever for students to employ this strategy. In fact, most two-year colleges now have formal agreements with four-year institutions that allow students to easily transfer from one institution to the next.

For example, Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland has partnerships with more than 30 four-year institutions, including Case Western Reserve University and University of Pittsburgh. Columbus State Community College has "preferred pathway" partnerships with nine Ohio-based institutions, including Otterbein University, Ohio University, and The Ohio State University. At Lorain County Community College, students can transfer to one of 15 institutions. Outside Ohio, UCLA is another example of a school that has community college partnerships.

Interested? Here's what families need to know:

1. Transfer partnerships simplify the process. Transfer partnerships outline the classes a student must take to ensure a seamless transition to a four-year institution.

"These classes meet the requirements of their associate degree and also meet elective or major credits for their four-year degree," explains Dr. Lisa Phillips, dual admission program coordinator at Columbus State.

Some programs are specific to a partner institution, explains Phillips. For example, Columbus State offers a dual-enrollment program with Otterbein University. Students in the program who maintain at least a 2.75 GPA can automatically transition to Otterbein for their final two years of college.

The program also strives to integrate students into life at Otterbein while they're still at Columbus State. "They have a chance to connect with the campus community at sporting events, at arts events, or by using the library," notes Phillips.

Tip: Explore the transfer programs offered by your local community college on their website.

2. Today's community colleges are vibrant academic communities. If you think of community college as a "less-than" route for your student, think again. Community colleges are vibrant places—and not just for academics.

"We have student life, we have academic honors, we have students who do undergraduate research here—we have the college experience here," says Dr. Desiree Polk-Bland, executive dean for advising and student support at Columbus State.

3. An associate degree can be the perfect way to ease into college. It's not just the savings that can make earning an associate degree at a community college a win-win for students.

The fact is that some students are just not ready for a four-year college. Earning an associate degree can allow these students more time to get comfortable with the idea of leaving home for college.

"One of the things we do here is build confidence," adds Polk-Bland. "We have smaller class sizes, and we have a lot of support and wraparound services. So, we're going to help with that transition."

The growing popularity of these programs comes as no surprise to Gorrell. "It's a result of families becoming better informed about the costs of college and being much more deliberate. And that's a really good thing." ■

Interview with

Nancy O'Dell

Emmy award-winning entertainment journalist Nancy O'Dell is the co-host of "Entertainment Tonight" and former co-anchor of "Access Hollywood." She has interviewed numerous high-profile personalities and celebrities from the Obamas to Oprah—and now it's *Your Teen*'s turn to interview her. We chatted with her about her career and life as a mom of a 12-year-old.

Tell me a little bit about what you do, and the journey that took you to "Entertainment Tonight."

I majored in marketing, so I started out in TV sales at the Florence-Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, television station. Because it was a small TV market, I also did some reporting for the news on the weekend. I thought it was an interesting job because the stories were ever-changing. It was something different every weekend. From there I got a call from a TV station in Charleston, South Carolina. I really wanted to live in Charleston because it was this beautiful, fun city, and I was young. I was the crime reporter there, and that beat was completely fascinating to me. The police let me go on ride-alongs, and the story, again, was so different every day. That's what I loved about being a reporter—no two days were the same. It's what I still love today.

What kind of advice would you offer to a young person who wants to do what you do?

My advice is to go out and get the experience doing the interviews. Experience is so important because there is definitely a skill to doing a good interview. It's frustrating to viewers if they are watching an interview, and the reporter is not asking the questions they want to hear the answers to.

I'll give you the best example of somebody who has experience and where you see that experience pay off—Gayle King's interview with R. Kelly. Gayle came from a local news background. That's where she and Oprah became best friends, because they worked in local news together way back when. Her experience was why the interview was so great—she handled it with such poise and grace. And she asked everything you wanted to her to ask as a viewer.

I know you were in the pageant world, and so much has changed since then. Would you encourage your daughter to do that today, or do you have a different perspective on it?

That's a tough question to answer. I like the focus on the interview skills, the talent, and the fact that you get a scholarship from it, but I wouldn't encourage her to parade around in a swimsuit. I think that part of it is a little antiquated. I love the fact that I got a whole year of college paid for being part of Miss America, representing South Carolina, and I went around for an entire year speaking as a representative of South Carolina. I went on an international trade relations program to Japan, so that was an experience I'll never forget. That public speaking helped me out so much with my job today, so I could never trade that.

Is your daughter interested in doing pageants?
No, because it's not so much a thing in California, and not so much a popular thing to do in this day and time. If I said the word "pageant" to her, I don't even know if she would know what that is. Back in my time, in the late 80s and the 90s and in the South, pageants were very popular.

Reality competitions are more popular now as a place for people to showcase their talents, like "The Voice," and "American Idol." My daughter would love to do a cooking competition; she's big into cooking. She loves the kid celebrity chef shows. We do a fun thing when making dinner sometimes. She wants me to give her a bunch of different ingredients and then she creates a dish or meal from them. We go to the grocery store, and we'll just pick random ingredients. She does a good job; her creations are really delicious!

Does she clean up?
She actually does. She'll want a nice allowance after she does it, but she does clean up afterwards.

I think I read somewhere that you're very into scrapbooking with your daughter.
I am. I'm huge into taking pictures and documenting the memories and stuff. She loves that, too. We'll go back and look at her baby pictures and things that she did. My mom passed away when my daughter was a year old, so it's a great way to remember my mom, who was an incredible mother. It's a great bonding moment with my daughter to talk about and remember the things we have done.

What do you see changing as she's entering early adolescence, or what are the things you're worried about?
She has started talking about some of the cliques. I've heard other moms say the friend drama starts about this age. Her teachers told me that she doesn't really get into all the drama, and that's one thing that I've been so happy about. She gets along with everybody, so I love that about her. But sometimes she gets her feelings hurt if she's not always included, so I'm trying to give her a good sense of herself. I think that's one place where family is important. If she knows that she's got this family who loves her tremendously, that we're always there for her, that's the most important thing—just a good, strong sense of self.

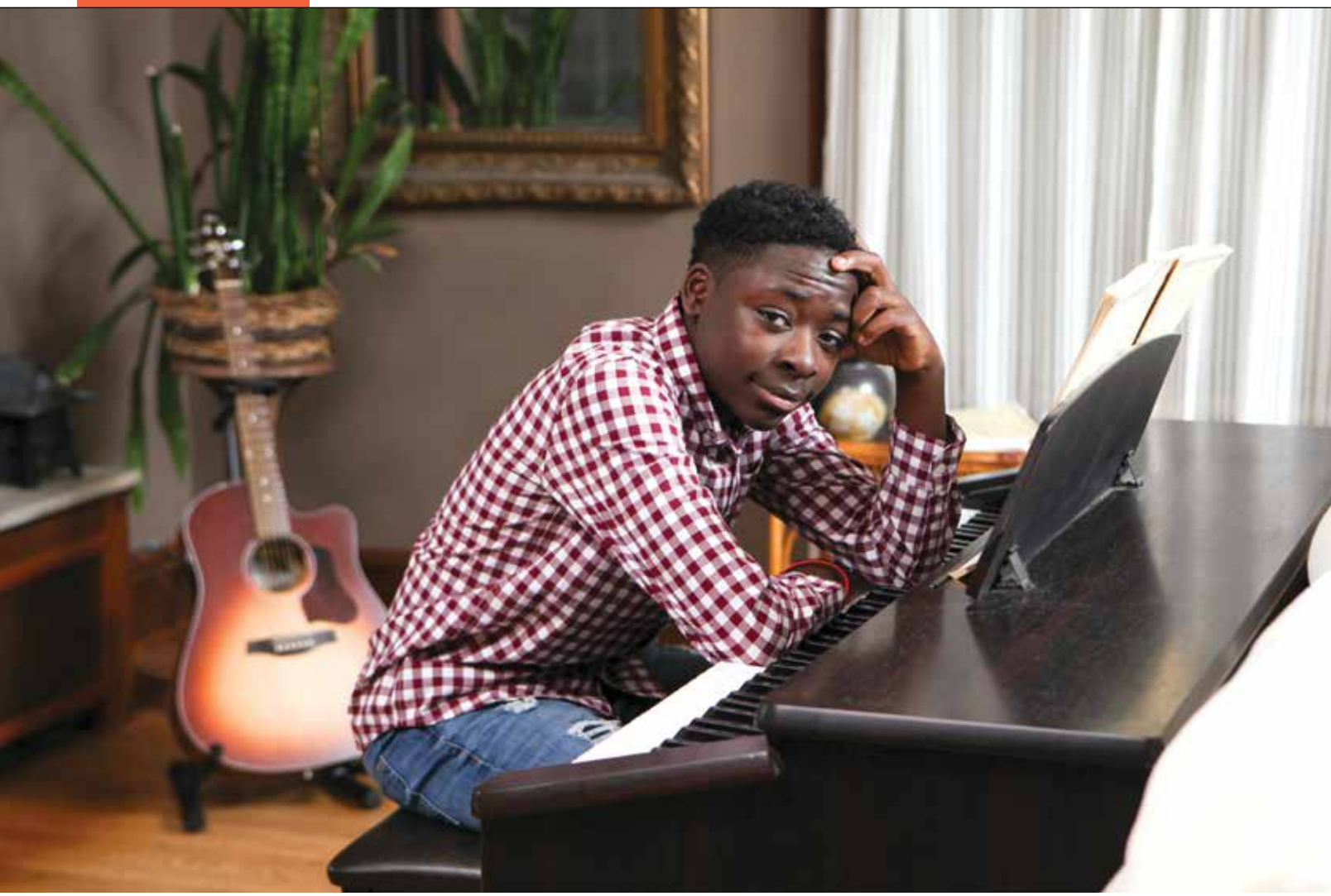
How would you describe your parenting style?
I'm a very involved mom. I help her with her homework and I attend almost all her events. My daughter is very athletic and does every sport in the world—volleyball, basketball, soccer, softball, track, tennis. She plays in sports at school and in the community, so she has a very busy sports schedule. My mom and dad showed up at every sports event I ever did, and I know how good that made me feel, so I make it a point to show up at her events. We finish taping at about 3 p.m. or a little after, and her games are after school, so usually I can make them and that makes me very happy. It's so much fun to watch her excel in sports; it's such a highlight of my day.

We have great conversations, and we play a lot. She and I play a ton of sports together. She'll be doing homework, I'll say work hard, do your homework for an hour, and then we'll take a 10-minute break and go compete in a basketball game of horse. Then she'll come back in, work for another hour, and we'll go out and take another 10-minute break and play volleyball. I strongly recommend it to everyone because it gives kids a goal and it gets some energy out so they aren't distracted when doing their work.

My biggest thing is for her to have a strong sense of self. I want her to know that she can be strong, and that she can do anything that she wants to do.

What do you want your daughter to know, based on your own experiences in this difficult industry?
My biggest thing is for her to have a strong sense of self. I want her to know that she can be strong, and that she can do anything that she wants to do. I love the #MeToo movement and that women feel like they can speak up for themselves. I love the fact that in this time, women feel strong and they don't feel like they "age out" and companies seem to respect experience. I want my daughter to have a career for as long as she wants to. I want her to know that she can stick up for herself. I want her to believe in herself as much as I believe in her, which is a ton! ■

Interview by Susan Borison



Facing the Music

Should parents let their kids quit music lessons?

By Kim O'Connell

It's 9:55 on a Saturday morning, and my preteen son finally rolls out of bed, throws on some clothes, and reluctantly combs his hair. He's running late for his piano lesson, and he's not thrilled about going, but he gets in the car without too much grumbling. I try not to grumble either, because he's sticking to our arrangement: I don't pressure him to practice, and he doesn't quit.

Some of his friends have quit music lessons, and I understand the temptation. My 9-year-old daughter also takes piano lessons, and for now, it's non-negotiable. But the tween and teen years are often when free time with peers or other activities such as sports or part-time jobs take precedence over parent-directed music lessons. In the battle for their free time, often something has to give.

For some parents, quitting music lessons is a relief—one less thing to squabble over with our teens. But for other parents, this is a sad moment, especially in light of the touted benefits of music education. In fact, research shows that a high majority of surveyed adults later regret not learning to play an instrument.

What should parents do? Push their teens into sticking with their chosen instrument? Or let them quit altogether?

Most parents, child-rearing experts, and music educators are in the don't-quit camp, or at least in the don't-quit-too-early

Photo by Beth Segal

camp. In her book *How To Be a Happier Parent*, writer K.J. Dell'Antonia says that music is one area where parents might want to push a little longer. Experts say playing music "doesn't really become fun until you reach a certain level, and it's unfair to a child not to let them get there," says Dell'Antonia.

Katy O'Grady of Fairfax, Virginia, came to this conclusion when her son, Will, wanted to quit trumpet lessons in fifth grade. As someone who had played in school band and still sings in adult chorales, O'Grady knew the joy that comes from sticking with music. So she turned to old-fashioned bribery. In exchange for practicing, she gave Will some Yu-Gi-Oh! trading cards, which were then all the rage. By middle school, she says, Will no longer needed to be bribed. He embraced his instrument, playing in school all the way through marching band at Virginia Tech. "I told him that music is something you'll always have," O'Grady says. "There are lots of ways to participate as an adult. Now that he's out of college, he's not playing anymore, which makes me a little sad. But I think he'll come back to it."

As kids become teens, having choices and flexibility is important, says Rebecca Carey, who teaches both Suzuki and traditional flute for Levine Music, a music education center in Washington, D.C. If they've hit the wall with one instrument or style of music, then maybe their interest could be rekindled if they switched instruments, teachers, or genres, Carey says. She adds that it's helpful for parents and teens to make an agreement about the length of time the student will continue with lessons, whether it's another month, semester, or year, to avoid snap judgments when the teen might just be feeling down.

"Listening to your child and respecting what they are telling you are so important," Carey says. "Teenagers like it when they feel they're in control of a certain part of their lives."

Being honest about your own music regrets or struggles can help build bridges with teens, too, says Alyson Schafer, a family counselor and author of *Honey, I Wrecked the Kids*. "If you push or force a teen, you are likely to get more resistance and create strain in the parent-child relationship," says Schafer. Instead, focus on encouragement. "Share your own story of regret or talk about other times the teen felt they couldn't do something but discovered that, with patience and practice, they actually could." Schafer also suggests that a temporary break from lessons—say, a six-month hiatus—might take the pressure off and make a teen more likely to return to music down the road.

If you try these things and your teen still wants to quit, then it's probably time. Parents can take heart in knowing that the musical grounding they've given their child might play out in some positive way later in life. As one parent I talked to said, "We opted not to push our child to continue with lessons because we wanted pursuing music to be about joy and expression."

That's what I want my kids to feel about music too, and for now, that means they will continue to play. But if they ever decide to quit, I hope I'll be understanding, knowing they stuck with it as long as they could. ■

A Path Between Us, Paved in Stories

By **Hannah Grieco**

When my autistic son stims, his hands curl into two "okay" signs, and the pinky, ring, and middle fingers on each hand flutter, telling the story of his mood via the height and frequency of their waves. He sucks in air, rather than taking smooth breaths. It's close to a whistle, but not quite that shrill. His teeth chatter but don't click.

My son remembers every fact, every scientist's and archeologist's theory, every funny footnote from a research paper referenced in that YouTube video he saw six months ago. He prefers black holes and exotic, venomous spiders. He is drawn to ancient armies and geologic processes. But when it comes to most fiction, he sniffs disdainfully. He listens for 15 seconds and then interrupts: "Mom, would you mind if we stopped now?" He is polite, yet insistent, in his rejection of Rowling and Tolkien.

But for my words, my fiction, he stims. He lets me read my story out loud to him. He gasps, then hoots, standing up to pace behind me before leaning over and reading along in a whisper in my ear.

This is really about him, not just some kid, and he can tell.

His fingers quiver, energy coursing through them, a typical stim for an atypical boy. When the dance slows, I know the dialogue has turned false. It needs revising. When his fingers pick up the pace, I am on track. This is how kids talk, his fingers tell me. This is how kids feel. I have an authenticity Geiger counter in the form of my autistic son's hands.

Adult autistics ask parents to embrace the beauty of their children's rigid focus, and I try to do that. My son's ability to follow an 87-step origami pattern is both astounding and alien to me. I get lost after step three on my beginning duck pattern, and he pats my shoulder encouragingly, handing me his detailed dragon with scales.

"Keep this for inspiration, Mom."

I place it on my writing desk and try folding my duck again. He places his fingers on mine, enjoying touch when it is his to control, and he helps me to find the exact creases and folds that create life from flatness.

Before I can thank him, he asks me about the subatomic particles in the molecules that make up paper.

"I don't know what's smaller than a quark," I answer him. He pats my shoulder again.

But despite my growth as a listener and mother, I yearn for a connection with him through fiction. I want to share what I love, too. I don't need a highway. Just a path—a small, one-lane country road that allows for thoughtful, quiet travel in both directions.

So I write a tiny story. One page, which stretches to two as I fall in love with the characters. A contemporary fantasy, about extraordinary boys who are sent to a special school for behaviorally challenged kids. These boys are ignored by the world, disregarded by teachers and peers alike at other schools, but not here. There is no Applied Behavioral Analysis, with its unyielding, aggressive attempts to mask the "other." There are no assistants with tight grips, or small, empty rooms with locked doors and narrow windows to watch desperate children come unhinged.

These boys are heroes here. They unite to become a team of thinkers that defend incompetent adults from other, more intelligent and nefarious adults. These characters find comfort and inspiration in each other, rather than from the neurotypical world they are supposed to conform to.

My son's stims go wild. He listens to every word, hands reaching out to my shoulders with each pass as he paces. He hears all 3,000 words and begs at the end, "Mom, please, what happens next?" And so I write more. I write chapter after chapter of a story that is fantasy without magic or hobbits.

I create a school where the main character's gifts eclipse his awkwardness. A lunchroom where friends save him a spot at their table. A classroom where fellow students ask where he is when he's absent. Groups of smiling kids in the hall laugh at his jokes and put their arms, carefully, with permission, around his shoulders. He is a part of a whole, a limb on a body. Necessary. Appreciated.

This world that does not really exist breaks my heart as I write it, the novel slowly transforming into a wish list for my son. Many thousands of words later, he still stims over my shoulder. Continues to whisper in my ear: *How will it end? What will happen in book two? Will you write an entire series?* His fingers make their "okay" signs. His teeth chatter.

We meet on this path and continue walking together. We will widen it as we go. ■

Hannah Grieco is a writer and parent advocate in Arlington, Virginia. Her pieces have appeared in Washington Post, Huffington Post, Motherwell, First for Women, *and more.*

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In the Dark

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman

For 21 years, my husband has been the movie buff in the family. He can watch the same movie over and over (and over) again. On any given night, the TV is tuned in to one of the *Star Wars* movies, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Shawshank Redemption* (which seems to be on at least one channel every night), or, if all else fails, a John Hughes movie. So, it makes sense that he is the one that has taken the kids to see every movie. But three kids and all these years later, I am feeling a bit left out.

With all the hype around *Avengers: Endgame*, and with a few teens interested in seeing it, I finally raise my hand.

"So what time are we seeing *Avengers* tomorrow?" I ask one evening. I am pretty sure I hear the needle scratch the record.

"*We*?" I hear someone ask.

"Yeah, I'm thinking this is the one."

"Mom, you haven't seen *any* of them. You won't understand it, *and* you are going to hate it."

All true, but none of this puts a dent in my FOMO.

"It doesn't matter—it's gotten so much hype. I want to go. I heard I will really like it—girl power, the whole thing."

Teen shakes his head, mutters to my husband, "She's going to hate it," and leaves the room.

"He's probably right, honey," my husband says. You aren't going to like it."

"But you, and all the reviews, have been raving about it. Why do you say that?"

"Because I know you."

Gauntlet thrown.

"What time are we leaving?"

With that, one of the kids thoughtfully pulls up an 11-minute YouTube summary of all 21 movies for me to watch on the way to the theater. It's showtime. Popcorn in hand, legs stretched out on the new recliners, and I am in the zone. I mutter one last question to my husband ("Who's Thanos again?"), and I am ready to be *wowed*. I am already thinking about buying some *Endgame* "merch," as the kids say.

I am very confused the entire three (long) hours of the film. So many characters and story lines. I realize I am, in fact, missing the backstory. For. Every. Character.

I glance at the kids (includes husband). They are entranced—they know the characters, their back stories, the subtle references. And that's when I realize: *None of it matters.*

They are willing to be together in public (a dark theater counts, right?). I have my legs outstretched for three hours (read: no laundry), and serious popcorn inhalation (read: no dinner). Why have I been opting out of this activity?

Sure, I have *no* idea what's going on—but what else is new? ■

Stephanie Silverman *is the publisher of* Your Teen.

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