

Printed Richmond Magazine July 2003

EIGHT POINTS FOR EASIER LIVING WITH TEENAGERS:

‘There are two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children;  
one of these is roots, the other, wings.

*Hedding Carter.*

Researching this article brought home to me how negatively we perceive teenagers. What a weight on their shoulders. I heard that ‘all teenagers are thugs’, that they are bastards, and a load of expletives that can’t be printed! I am a Life Coach and the mother of three teenagers; I have learnt (and am still learning!) to live with my teenagers, out of sheer experience! The following points help me to do just that, at the same time as holding onto my belief in myself as a mother, and supporting my kids as they make the transition from adolescence to adulthood to the best of my ability.

Living with adolescents (or anyone for that matter) is always going to be a challenge. We need to be aware that loving someone does not give him or her, the right to abuse us, so set your boundaries, stick to them, and never give up!

- ✓ **Clarify your objectives, as a parent.** Write them down, e.g. that your child grows to be responsible members of society, that he learns how to bring about goals that matter to him and that make those around him happy. Get rid of any intentions which will fulfil you, but not necessarily your child – i.e. he’s going to be an architect. If he doesn’t want to be an architect, you’ve got trouble!
- ✓ **Turf out any negative beliefs** you have about teenagers and replace them with positive present beliefs. For example ‘All teenagers are thugs’, could be replaced with ‘The vast majority of teenagers are responsible and caring’ Do your teenager a favour; start believing in him and your parenting.
- ✓ **Create a metaphor** for yourself depicting your role as a parent making it as simple or grand as you like. For example ‘I am the teacher who brings light, love and hope to my child’ or ‘I am the oil which calms the stormy waters’. Repeat this to yourself often. It reminds you of your role, and helps you to be objective especially in times of conflict.
- ✓ **Decide what sort of parent you want to be, and become it.** Think of a parent you really admire. What are the qualities this person brings to his/her parenting? Write down at least seven. Now imagine you are a fly on the wall listening to your teenager talk about you as a parent, what would you like to hear? (For instance ‘my mum and I are mates’ or ‘my dad is good fun’), again think of seven and write them down. Next, choose as many qualities as you want from these two lists to create another list. This is the parent you now are, look at it often and commit to reinforcing these qualities in your parenting.

- ✓ **Teach by who you are, not by what you say.** Children quickly notice the gap between what we do and what we say. If you want your children to be honest and gentle, then you must take steps to be those things yourself.
- ✓ **Deal with your own issues as they arise.** A teenager will pick up any emotion. Old anger and resentment will blow, like a sandstorm, into all the crevices of a family, to be thrown in your face at times of stress. You will have more control and be in a better position to help your kids if you sort yourself out and learn not to take life so personally. If you need help, get help. Talk to a friend, your doctor, or there are numerous professional bodies and services available from Life Coaching to Counselling.
- ✓ **Trust yourself and your parenting,** not what your teenager appears to have accomplished. Teenagers are learning self-awareness, independence and responsibility. It is their nature to experiment and to make mistakes. Allow this, and keep trying to tell them the truth, guide them, be consistent, listen to them, to not judge them. They grow up at different times and different rates. For example, he won't revise for his GCSE exams. What can you do? You can lock him in his bedroom with his books, you can nag him, and you can bribe him. You may be at your wits end. You want to see him succeed, his excitement, his realisation, his future, his belief in himself growing. You want the best for him; his achievement is ours, as is his perceived 'failure'. Our teenagers' achievements validate us, their failures make us doubt ourselves. In any job, we need feedback and validation but as parents this will often not be forthcoming for many years, so all we can do is remember our objectives, reinforce them, remind ourselves we have done our best and let it go! Then prepare for a few more interesting years and remember the old saying '**A good enough mother is worth her weight in gold**'.
- ✓ **Teenagers are learning to make choices.** They come to understand that when they make a choice, they change the future. They are learning to take responsibility for themselves. They need our help to point out the consequences of their choices. Ask them to understand that at any given moment they have a choice be it whether to revise, have sex, or take drugs. Spell out clearly what the consequence of any action may be, reiterate it when necessary, and be honest. If you do not know the facts, then find out. Teenagers know when we are not being honest and besides, finding out the facts may also put our own mind at rest. Then **trust them and trust yourself!**

✓

Good luck to you all! I hope this is of some use. If anyone has any questions or comments, please contact me, details below.

Penny Waite is a professional Life Coach, and Thought Field Therapist, working in the Richmond Area. To contact her call 020 8892 0269 or e-mail [penny@pennywaite.co.uk](mailto:penny@pennywaite.co.uk); website [www.pennywaite.co.uk](http://www.pennywaite.co.uk)

