

Sage Book Club Notes

Get out of my life, but first could you take me and Cheryl to the mall?

by Anthony E. Wolf, Ph. D.

This rather humorous book is broken up into three parts.

- 1) Adolescence – what is actually happening, physical & emotional
- 2) Between Parent & Teenage – what happens with this relationship
- 3) Reality & the world outside – covers things such as divorce, school, electronics, sex, drugs & suicide

Wolf's format is very interesting as he interweaves conversation vignettes to further explain the situation and/ or suggest a resolution. I found these very helpful and often humorous. His book provides an explanation of why teens do what they do & offers to help us translate teenage behavior into its true, often less complicated meaning.

Preface

- Teens today have been raised in a different era with far less harsh parenting tactics.
- Teens feel more empowered - This requires change in parenting tactics
- You are not doing anything wrong – everyone confronts the same kinds of problems

Intro

- Teens treat adults that is less obedient, much more fearless & definitely more outspoken than that of previous generations
- Physical punishment is no longer acceptable
- Primitive conscience: "I don't want to do bad things because of what will happen to me" vs. Higher conscience: "I don't want to do bad things because of their effect on others"
- While teens demand freedom, they still need to feel their parent's strength.
- Old style respect in gone – instilling fear is not a good parenting practice
 - Accept a teen's right to say what he has to. Do not descend to the teen's level of name-calling. It's the strength to walk away which will gain your teen's respect.
 - Learn to not be hurt by what your teen says

Part I - Adolescence

- First main force of adolescence is Physical changes – sexuality. Different in boys & girls
- Second Hallmark of adolescence is psychological – tells the teen to turn away from childhood & childish feelings. This causes teens to turn away from their parents – the center of their childhood.
- Parents who want a true perspective of their teen need to view them away from the home
- Loss of any long term perspective

- Boys become vanishing experts – wanting nothing to do with their parents is normal
- Girls fight! –Better at communication – can be more of a strain on parents
- Teens will be sensitive to hurt puppies, starving children, but treat parents like dirt!
- Teen girls make strong, loving relationships with their peers – cliques. Provides strong self-worth
- Boys – tough & being good at sports. , fighting or talking about fighting. In High School – cool replaces tough
- The only thing that matters is what their peers think!
- Letting go is the main task of a parent – so this while setting limits & making demands. Do what you think is best – even if you have no idea what that is. To give love to a child who not seem to want it.
- As teens they are out in the real world. We cannot hold them back and we cannot rescue them.
- It is NOT OK to take out your disappointment on your child
- We have the task of making decisions for our children. It is key to do what we think is right & adopt a firm positive posture. Do not waiver, as then the teen will come in for the kill! Own your decision.
- Adolescence is a time of separation. A parent who does too much for their child may ultimately get in the way of their progress.
- Keep stating reality, as your teen does not have a true sense of what reality is
- Without fear as leverage, parenting is harder. It requires more effort on our part.

Part II Between Parent & Teenager

- Respect is learned where it is given - JUST GOOD STUFF!!! –bsl
- Listen up to a point. Listen to their initial argument, see if it makes sense
- If once a goal/decision has been made and the teen continues to badger, the parent should walk away
- Offer to listen, but don't give advice! Taking our advice or to recognize it's helpfulness feels to a teen like defeat.
- Trust is to adolescence what fairness is to childhood
- Reality of teens is that they lie & sneak around – The issue is what parents do when we find out! Don't focus on the lie and lose sight of the more immediate & usually important issues!
- If parents are honest in dealing with others, especially in dealing with their children, they are teaching honesty
- You will not win the battle of controlling your teen
- The essence of firm, strong parenting is the ability to make rules & keep them in place!
- It is best to deal with disobedience the morning after! Breaking curfew...etc., but teens should be confronted when the rules are broken
- Conflict is the meat & potatoes of most parent-teen relationships – learn when to let go...
- Teens respond in two ways:
 - Tactic 7A – threat of absolute disobedience with accompanying profanity
 - Tactic 7B – complaint of unfairness, switching over to grief at feeling unloved.

- Both tactics plead for parental response. Parents must NOT respond... if you do all is lost!
- No debate on hitting teens. It should not be done
- Parents need to be above children – protectors, nurturers & guides
- Parents need to feel backed up by their spouse. This is very basic to marriage.

Part III – Reality & the World Outside

- Covers divorce, moving, Single parenting, step parenting, sex, drugs & alcohol, suicide
- Parents have little control on how their teen performs at school
- 11 year olds with good study habits will probably be good students when they are teens
- His sections on drugs & electronics are a bit outdated as the copyright on this book is 2002.
- Best suggestion is to just “Turn off” when you need to
- When it comes to sex, the main role of parenting is to educate your kids. It may be better to provide other means for them to understand such as books, another adult etc. They will NOT want to have this conversation with their parents. It is just too embarrassing.
- Kids will have sex. Don’t delude yourself in to thinking otherwise.
- It is a good idea to have a rule if your child is stranded at a party – we will pick you up, no questions asked. PERIOD! This conveys the following message:
 - The parents place the child’s safety over everything else
 - They feel that drinking & driving are so dangerous that they are ready to abandon all other considerations to prevent it.
- Girls are more likely to kill themselves
- All suicide attempts are serious – intervention can make a big difference!
- Mandatory warning sign – teen talking about wanting to die
- Parents need to talk to someone experienced in dealing with teen suicide

Conclusion

- Remember that it is only a stage of lived that does come to an end!
