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director of
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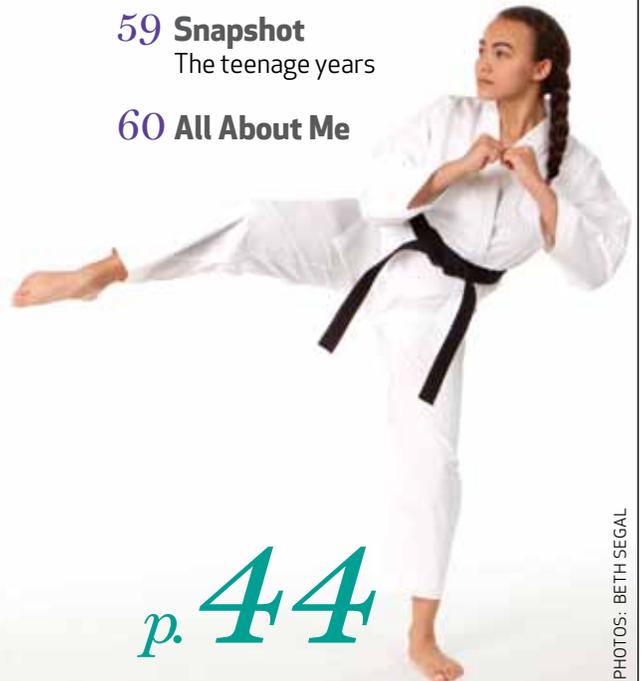
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PHOTOS: BETH SEGAL



ON THE COVER

Our Special College Issue

Why autonomy is the best graduation gift for your teenager, plus what you need to know about paying that tuition bill.

COVER PHOTO: BETH SEGAL

LAST CHANCE
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for parents



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What happened to my little guy, who used to be so nice?
Is this mono? Is he just tired? Is this dandruff? Is this lice?
Are they giving too much homework? Is she behind in school?
Should I approach a bully's parents?
What's just teasing and what's cruel?
Is he gifted? Is he stunted? Do kids ever get depressed?
Why does he take half hour showers?
Is this how a kid should dress?
Is she on the phone too much? Is it too early for "the talk?"
Can I just walk into her room? Or do I have to knock?
Just how long does puberty last? Can't we speed this up?
Or make it stop? Or make it easy?
Should she be wearing all this makeup?
Why won't he tuck his shirt in? Why are there holes in all his jeans?
Should I send her off to boarding school? Or is she just being a teen?
Rated R movies? PG-13? Too many video games?
What's the best way to relate to him? Should he use my first name?
Why can't she make any friends? Does she have low self-esteem?
Should I go talk to her or should I let her come to me?
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EDITOR'S LETTER

One done with college. Two graduating in April. One in the middle of applications.

They each went through the college application process with their friends, and I went through it with mine. Each of my friends chose different approaches: the mom who helped create a highly competitive resume, the dad who wrote the essay, the parent who hired a professional college counselor, the parent who mapped out a calendar of deadlines, the parent who did very little, and everything in between.

I was in the "parent who did very little" category. My involvement (or lack thereof) began when my oldest kids were young, and I felt too overwhelmed with five kids to follow their schoolwork. This pattern continued through the college process. Though I read their essays if they asked.

But at some point with each kid, I had solid reasons to second-guess my approach. One kid applied to five schools but only got accepted to one. (Maybe the pool of choices should have been bigger?) One kid applied to only one school. (That felt like a terrible plan on the day of early decision announcements.) And one kid actually missed the application deadline. (Maybe I should have helped with a timetable?) I rationalized my hands-off approach by saying that if they couldn't get the application in on time, then maybe they weren't ready to go to college. And then, I panicked.

Why had I abandoned my kids? No matter what I do in my life, I ask for help. I ask many people to edit my writing. I run ideas past my husband. I ask my daughters for fashion feedback. (That can really be deflating.) So why would I leave my kids to do everything on their own?

Well, I can say that my approach wasn't all good, and it wasn't all bad. My kids did learn independence, sprinkled with some resentment. But after reading this issue's college feature, I think I might have tweaked my approach if I were given a do-over. Take advantage of the great advice from many experts before deciding what works best for your teen.

This issue goes beyond college, though. Two celebrities, Larry Trilling and William Lucas Walker, share endearing personal stories about parenting. Dr. Gilboa talks about managing her tween's sleep cycle. And each member of the Miozzi family writes about his or her experience as the oldest child battled cancer. They let us catch a small glimpse of their world, both the fear and the love.

Once you're done with the print magazine, make sure to check out the wealth of advice online. With the support of Verizon, *Your Teen* presented four webinars on technology. They're all available on the *Your Teen* YouTube channel. And Tree of Knowledge sponsored *The Disorganized Student*, a one-hour panel discussion about ADD, which you can also find on YouTube.

Stay tuned for our 4th annual College Event sponsored by Hathaway Brown, January 27, 2015, at Hathaway Brown in Cleveland, Ohio.

Thanks to our sponsors, advertisers, and you.

Enjoy the read.



FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



Jessica Lahey

We're big fans of Jessica Lahey, whose writings in the *New York Times* and elsewhere are a must-read for any parent negotiating the ups and downs of adolescence. Turn to page 30 to read her take on how we (parents) can set our children up to succeed in college (and beyond). Her book, *The Gift of Failure*, will be published by HarperCollins in August of 2015.



Aaron Greene

As founder of College Liftoff, which has helped thousands of teenagers find a college that fits academically, socially, and financially, Aaron Greene has plenty of insight into the right way to apply to college. You'll find our Q&A with Greene on page 38.



William Lucas Walker

We loved the opportunity to chat with Emmy-award winning William Lucas Walker (*Will & Grace*, *Frasier*) this issue. He's now a stay-at-home dad, raising a teen-tween duo, and loving every (well, most every) moment.



Deborah Gilboa

Does your adolescent sleep through her alarm most mornings? Then you'll want to turn to page 53 and read Dr. Deborah Gilboa's *Go to Bed Already!* Dr. G is a frequent contributor to *Your Teen* and the author of *Get the Behavior You Want... Without Being the Parent You Hate*.



Lawrence Trilling

If you're a fan of NBC's popular *Parenthood*, then you'll want to flip to page 55 to read our interview with producer/director and father of three (16, 14 and 11) Lawrence Trilling, who tells *Your Teen*: "We often draw on our own experiences and try to infuse these real-life experiences into the characters." No wonder we love it so much.

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Oops!

If you've ever sent an email or text to the WRONG recipient, you know that awful, sinking feeling when you realize your mistake. Here are some examples of the valuable lessons parents and teens have learned on the importance of paying attention to detail when emailing or texting.



TEEN ANSWERS

I meant to text my friend to remind him to bring a fake ID for the weekend, but I accidentally sent it to my dad.

Jon, Columbus, OH

I sent a text to a friend explaining my confusion about a relationship with a guy who I had slept with. I accidentally sent it to the guy.

Stacy, Silver Spring, MD

I meant to send a message to a friend containing gossip about one of our other friends, and I accidentally sent it to the girl that I was gossiping about. She was really angry but I just apologized profusely.

Sierra, Haslett, MI

My friend told her co-worker that the project they were working on was a joke. But she sent the work chat to her boss.

Eli, New York, NY

I found out before my friend that his mother had passed away. I texted a mutual friend and said

not to say anything. But I inadvertently texted the friend whose mother had died.

Dan, Millburn, NJ

I meant to text my girlfriend, "I want to feel your smooth legs," but by mistake I texted my sister.

Ray, Teaneck, NJ

I sent a personal and intimate holiday greetings message to a close friend but I accidentally sent it to all of my teachers.

Gidon, St. Louis, MO

My parents said I couldn't get together with my boyfriend, but I sent him a text to find out where he was picking me up. Unfortunately, I sent the text to my mom instead of my boyfriend.

Janae, Chesapeake, VA

"I had so much fun the other night." I meant to send this text my boyfriend but I sent it to my brother.

Danyelle, Hampton, VA

PARENT ANSWERS

My boss sent me a text early one morning asking me to come to work. I texted my wife to help me think of a way to get out of it. Surprise. I had actually texted my boss. Luckily, I have a pretty understanding boss.

Amanda, Dayton, OH

I hit "reply all" instead of "forward" on an email and complained about a client. That client saw my complaint and raised a big stink. I learned a hard lesson to be very careful before I click send on anything.

Nancy, Lincolnshire, IL

I sent a text to my friend to complain about my husband—and, well, hubby was on the group text.

Michelle, Raleigh, NC

I hit "reply all" on an email that included a potential client. I doubted this person's sincerity and suggested that we were wasting our time. Once I realized,

I was very uncomfortable to say the least. And the client immediately responded crying fowl.

Shannon, Brunswick, ME

I know two Andreas, one my realtor, one my client. I sent a lengthy email about houses I was interested in seeing and a list of the "must-haves" to the client. My client Andrea was clearly confused and suggested I contact her realtor. Embarrassing. And I had a meeting with that client the next day.

Sylvia, Lorain, OH

I thought I was texting one of my sisters to complain about our other sister. Turned out it was a group text and both sisters got it. After the initial panic, I sent a text to the sister I had written about saying, "Oops, but guess now you know how I feel!"

Melissa, Chagrin Falls, OH

ONLINE AT YOURTEENMAG.COM

WHAT'S TRENDING

➔ Did you get a chance to tune in to our recent webinar series on technology? Head over to *YourTeenMag.com* to watch one, two or all four of the webinars. They cover the gamut, from “How to be a Digital Savvy Parent” to “How to Monitor the Right Way” to “Real Online Worries” and “How to Use Technology to Get a Leg Up in College Admissions.”

➔ Got a question about your teenager? We can help. Submit your question—it's anonymous—at *YourTeenMag.com* and we'll ask an expert to answer it. Check it out at yourteenmag.com/ask-a-parenting-expert

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Proud of my family for their insights on Family Life in the Military published in [@YourTeenMag](https://twitter.com/YourTeenMag)



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Great article! So many great (and great paying) jobs only require a 2-year degree.

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Walker, US class of '14, utilized his passion for working with wood to create lathe-turned bowls and to complete his Eagle Scout project. And, when he wasn't working in our on-campus woodshop, the National Merit Semifinalist, could be found training to compete in the state wrestling finals.

Learn more at www.us.edu/UnleashHisPassion

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Men's housework time has doubled from **4 hours** per week in 1965 to about **9 hours** per week in 2011.

PEWSOCIALTRENDS.ORG



89% of grandparents say they play a pivotal role in their grandchildren's lives.

AARP.ORG

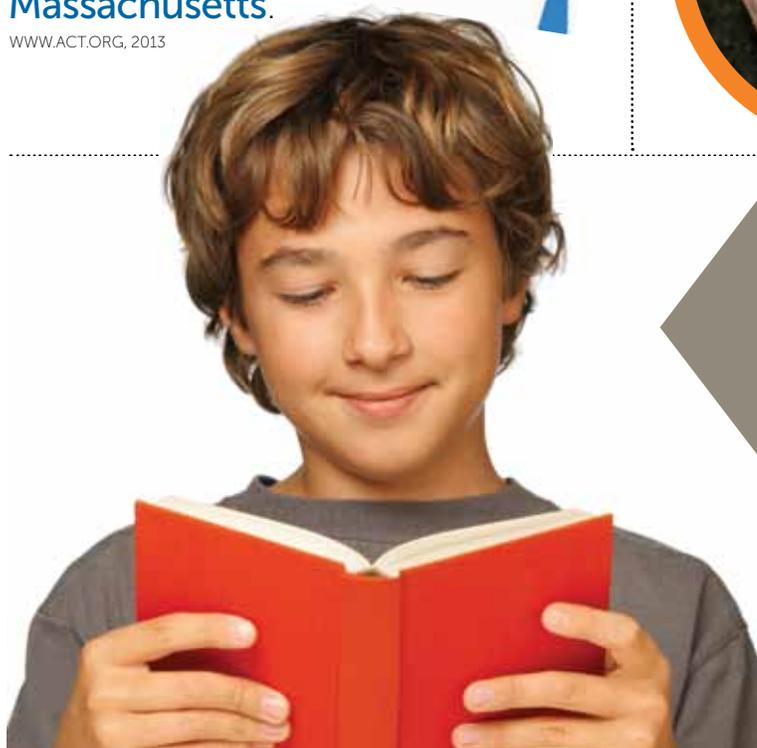
The state with the highest average composite ACT score is **Massachusetts**.

WWW.ACT.ORG, 2013



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HARRIS POLLS, 2014



75%

of younger Americans say they have read at least one book in print in the past year.

PEWINTERNET.ORG

Product Picks

Kid-tested and parent-approved, *Your Teen* recommends:



COCO-ROONS

On the lookout for wholesome snacks for your teenager? *Your Teen*'s Shari Silk recommends Wonderfully Raw's Coco-Roons. "They're delicious and come in a bunch of flavors." Plus, they're organic, dairy and gluten free, and flavored with maple syrup (not refined sugar). Healthy and delicious. Sweet. mycocoroons.com

JILL-E DESIGNS JACK HEMINGWAY

And you thought your backpack days were over. Not so with this leather take on the familiar favorite, the Jack Hemingway Leather Laptop Backpack. The roomy interior has pockets for a 15" laptop and all your essentials. "It's perfect for any business or casual environment, and especially great for overnight or long weekend trips," says *Your Teen* staffer Holly Kaye. "I especially liked the padded interior laptop pouch, as I am rather rough on my bags. Plus there's a trolley sleeve that allows it to be easily attached to a rolling suitcase!" jill-e.com



TOASTMASTER FOUR SLICE TOASTER

"Don't be fooled by the retro look of this toaster," says *Your Teen* photographer Beth Segal. "It offers modern convenience all the way." There's a bagel option for one-sided toasting, self-centering guides for perfect browning, and extra wide slots for those hand-hewn slices of extra special artisanal loaves. Family-friendly? You bet! Four slots gets everybody hot toast in a flash—and for a teenager who can't quite get out of bed in time, there's a very useful reheat function! carsons.com



JACKERY PHONE CASE

If running out of battery power ranks among life's big emergencies for your teenager, then the JackeryLeaf is for you. It's an iPhone case with a built in battery. "It kept my phone charged for up to six hours," says Madeline Taylor, daughter of *Your Teen*'s Eca Taylor. "If you find yourself running out of battery a lot, this is a great solution." jackeryusa.com

ARCTIC EASE INSTANT COLD WRAP

A must-have for the athlete in your house: Arctic Ease Instant Cold Wrap. It's a compression wrap that doubles as cold therapy for muscle cramps, repetitive motion injuries, and even minor sprains. Cool, huh? Madeline Taylor, daughter of *Your Teen*'s Eca Taylor, certainly thought so: "I used it to keep my foot cool during a 3-hour dance class. It felt like I was icing my foot the entire time." Comes in two sizes and it's reusable. articeasewrap.com



MODERN LITTLES

Is it your New Year's resolution to get more organized? Then look no further than these snazzy, functional bins from Modern Littles. "It's great," says Chase Golovan, daughter of *Your Teen* staffer Lisa Golovan. "Not only is it perfect for holding supplies, but it's super cute!" modernlittles.com



BOMBINIZZ PILLOW CARRIER

If your house is anything like *Your Teen*'s Diana Simeon's house, then packing for a sleepover is a bit like packing for a year abroad. "My girls like to pack heavy," she jokes. So, the Bombinizz Pillow Carrier was a pleasant surprise. "This bag holds a lot, including the pillow, and it's cute too. Plus, I can just throw it in the wash when it's dirty. Love it!" mybombinizz.com



8X10 DUCK TAPE SHEETS

If you haven't played around with Duck Tape in recent years—or ever—then now's the time. The brand has reinvented itself for the crafter and *Your Teen*'s Lisa Golovan is loving its new line of 8x10 Duck Tape Sheets, which are easy to cut to just the size you need. "I love these," she says. "I've used the colorful design sheets to make homemade cards and labels. There are so many fun colors and patterns to pick from." duckbrand.com



TRU CROSSOVER BREWER MULTI-BREW SYSTEM

Sometimes you feel like a cup, sometimes you feel like an entire carafe... of coffee that is. The Tru Crossover lets you decide. "You can make up to 10 cups or just a K-cup for one," says *Your Teen* editor Susan Borison. "Even the non-coffee lover likes to drink a cup!" bedbathandbeyond.com

AQUASANA WATER FILTRATION

"Timing is everything!" says *Your Teen* social media maven Mindy Gallagher, who received the Aquasana Water Filtration System just days after her refrigerator's water dispenser went kaput. "I was skeptical at first, but the taste of the water has won us all over. It's simple, fast and I love the free shipping on replacement filters." aquasana.com



Pet Peeves?



Photo: Beth Segal

Pets provide families with a lot of love, affection, fun, and ... extra work. Yes, a brand new pet is a great opportunity to teach adolescents responsibility, but how can you ensure that your brood will follow through with all of the promises they made when convincing you to adopt the adorable animal? Start with these three tips, courtesy of Dr. Aubrey Fine, a family therapist and author of *Faithful Companions*.

- **Don't nag.** It doesn't work. So, keep it positive.
- **Frame the narrative.** Your adolescent should understand that your new pet is dependent on your family for every-

thing. That means that part of being in the family is caring for Rover. What's more, a well-cared-for pet will enrich your family with plenty of affection.

- **Create a contract.** Of course, you can talk about all of the above until you're blue in the face, but if your teenager isn't motivated to take care of your newest family member, guess who'll be on the hook? Yep, you. So, create a pet care contract with detailed descriptions of your adolescents' obligations and consequences if they fail to fulfill them. Google "pet care contract" to find examples. The key, of course, is follow-through.

— Ahuva Sunshine

Curfew 101

Ahh, curfews. Necessary to you; evil to your teens. But, your curfew doesn't have to evoke an eye roll. Here are a few things you can try:

1. Open the floor for debate. Teens become frustrated with seemingly arbitrary rules, so let them partake in the preliminaries. Explain your fundamental goals of curfew—protecting sleep and physical security—and give them a chance to respond. Strive for a curfew that everyone can get behind, as well as agreed-upon consequences if the teen doesn't abide by it. Additionally, research your city's laws on curfews for minors to ensure your negotiated curfew remains within those parameters.

2. Be flexible. Curfew can vary, from day to day, especially from weekday to weekend, depending on your teen's schedule. Also consider renegotiating for special circumstances.

3. Establish consequences. According to psychologist Dr. Joseph Steiner, determining curfew is a balance in giving teens freedom and keeping them secure. Consider extending the curfew as your teen matures in his decision-making. But, a breach of curfew? Go back to Step 1 to reiterate the goals and impose the consequences, if necessary.



Photo: Beth Segal



Plum Poppy Seed Muffins



We were delighted when Deb Perelman, author of the popular *The Smitten Kitchen Cookbook*—and *SmittenKitchen.com*—shared this delicious recipe with *Your Teen*. Really, what teenager doesn't love a sweet and scrumptious muffin? And these are easy to make and wholesome, too. Yum.

Makes 12 standard muffins.

INGREDIENTS:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and browned and cooled, plus butter for muffin cups

1 large egg, lightly beaten

¼ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup packed dark or light brown sugar

¾ cup sour cream or a rich, full-fat plain yogurt

½ cup whole-wheat flour

1 cup all-purpose flour

¾ teaspoon baking powder

¾ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon table salt

Pinch of ground cinnamon

Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

2 tablespoons poppy seeds

2 cups pitted and diced plums, from about ¾ pound Italian prune plums (though any plum variety will do)

DIRECTIONS:

• Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Butter twelve muffin cups.

• Whisk the egg with both sugars in the bottom of a large bowl. Stir in the melted butter, then the sour cream. In a separate bowl, mix together the flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and poppy seeds, and then stir them into the sour cream mixture until it is just combined and still a bit lumpy. Fold in the plums.

• Divide batter among prepared muffin cups. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until the tops are golden and a tester inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean. Rest muffins in the pan on a cooling rack for 2 minutes, then remove them from the tin to cool them completely.

Do Ahead: Generally, I think muffins are best on the first day, but these surprised me by being twice as moist, with even more developed flavors on day two. They're just a little less crisp on top after being in an airtight container overnight.

Excerpted from *The Smitten Kitchen Cookbook* by Deb Perelman. Copyright © 2012 by Deb Perelman. Excerpted by permission of Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.



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How to Monitor?

That depends on the type of parent you are

By Diana Simeon



Like many parents, you may be grappling with how—and how much—to monitor your adolescent’s technology. A lot? A little? Somewhere in between?

Well, it depends. On you.

“Parenting doesn’t change because it’s digital,” says Hemanshu Nigam, an online security expert and father of four. “How you parent offline can help determine how you parent online.”

In other words, if you’re a parent who wants to know a lot about your adolescent’s activities, then chances are you’ll want to keep close tabs online, too. If you’re a parent who’s more hands off, you can do that online, too. Of course, your adolescent’s personality may also dictate the kind of monitoring you do. Some adolescents simply need more oversight than others.

But the number one rule for any kind of monitoring: tell your adolescent exactly what you’re doing.

“If you decide to monitor, it’s important to be upfront about it,” says parenting expert, Amy Speidel. “This allows you to discuss with your adolescent about why you believe this is an important part of keeping them safe.”

Telling your adolescent you are monitoring will help your adolescent accept that it’s about his or her well-being. Not telling—or snooping—only sends the message that you don’t trust your adolescent.

Nuts and Bolts

Here are the two basic forms of monitoring, and you may find some version of each useful:

Third-party software programs:

There are many (many) software programs that keep an eye on your adolescent’s online activity. These programs come in several flavors. Some allow you to monitor everything, from the particular sites your adolescent uses to the nitty-gritty details—as in exact keystrokes typed into your adolescent’s device. You can also use them to limit your adolescent’s online time and his access to sites or activities on your network (e.g. you can block access to pornography and dozens of other categories). Check out our resource page at bit.ly/YTmonitor to get started.

A two-party system: If a third-party software program that tracks everything is more than you want, then you can do the monitoring yourself. Simply let your

adolescent know that you will check her device on a regular basis, including viewing her social media activity, texts, and emails. How often is up to you, but even intermittent checks can be helpful. “There’s nothing stronger than intermittent reinforcement,” Speidel explains. “If your adolescent thinks it could happen anytime, then they are more likely to assume it could happen anytime.”

Talk, Talk, Talk

Remember: your teen can work around even the most stringent monitoring. He could use a public network or a friend’s device, for example. So, if your monitoring leads to your adolescent sneaking behind your back, you may want to rethink your approach.

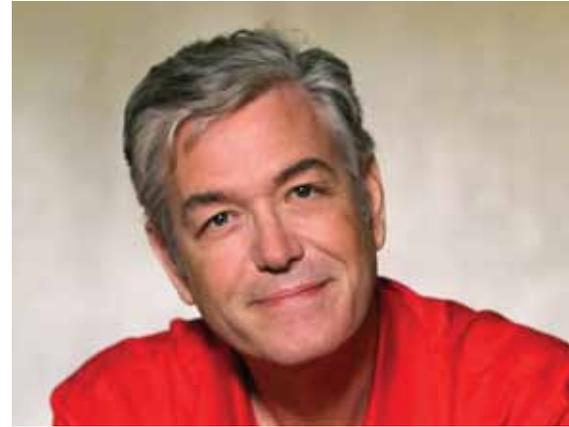
“If you’re setting up a situation in which you’re saying, ‘I am going to find out everything I can about you,’ they’ll probably go underground,” Speidel says.

Regardless of your approach, work to keep the lines of communication open as your adolescent heads into the teenage years. “Ultimately, it’s knowing your kid in real time, in real life, and having conversations that will make the difference,” Speidel says. ■

William Lucas Walker on Being a Dad

The Unexpected Joys

William Lucas Walker is an Emmy Award-winning writer and producer whose television credits include *Frasier*, *Will & Grace*, and *Roseanne*. Bill and his husband Kelly are the parents of Elizabeth and James, born in 2001 and 2005. Bill's blog, *Spilled Milk*, is featured on *HuffPost.com*.



What was it like when your daughter entered into her tween years?

Elizabeth has always been outspoken, strong-willed, and very sure of herself. But when she started sixth grade, we began to notice her confidence becoming shakier, with a heightened self-consciousness and concern with what others thought. When Elizabeth was young, she would go her own way—whether people joined or not. But starting about midway through sixth grade, the opinions of others—well, anyone who wasn't us—began to matter much more. Texting and social media were becoming the new currency, and she felt left out because we stuck to our guns about not getting her a phone or access to social media (most of which require a minimum age of 13) until she finished sixth grade.

How did you deal with that shift?

We were conflicted about letting her have an Instagram account. We had researched it, and realized that, as with YouTube, there was no effective way to filter out inappropriate content. When we finally allowed Instagram, it was within the parameters of a contract with guidelines specified for appropriate use. She had also signed a contract when she got her cellphone the year before. That

contract also outlined specific rules—no YouTube, bathing suit selfies, cursing, or disrespectful language—as well as our rights as parents to check texts at any time and talk to her friends' parents about what they see on their kids' phones. Elizabeth cursed early on in a text, and we took her phone away for two weeks. She's been really good about not letting that happen again.

Are you strict about other things?

We struggle sometimes with TV content, too. From the beginning we used the parental controls on our TV, so they've always been used to that. They've never been able to just flip on the TV whenever they want and watch whatever they want. Still, now that she's older, she doesn't understand why we won't let her watch things with explicit adult content. Like *Orange Is the New Black*. She argues: "But my friend watches it!" I told Elizabeth that the show's creator doesn't even allow her own kids to watch it. I've also tried to explain that once you've seen something too shocking, or sexual, or violent you can never unsee it. She rolls her eyes; we try to stick to our guns. Of course, we reevaluate and relax as she gets older—we occasionally allow cer-

tain R-rated things now. But overall, at 13, she thinks we're overprotective.

Did you always want to have kids?

I wanted to be a dad my whole life. I didn't come out until I was 32, and I didn't think I could ever be a dad. It wasn't a paradigm, not on the radar. A gay man who wanted to have kids? I might as well have been from Mars. Eventually, I met many other gay men who felt the way I did.

How did you and your husband figure out your roles at home?

Kelly and I both grew up in tight families and felt we'd benefitted enormously from having one parent at home; we wanted that for our kids as well. We mutually chose me to be what is now referred to as "the primary caregiver." I do most of the doctor's appointments, school events, bake sales, Halloween costumes, school projects—those kinds of hands-on things. Before kids, I'd experienced lots of professional highs in my career, which was good because I knew the limits of work rewards. It was great to write a TV show that makes people laugh, but it was nothing compared to my children's laughter or their hugs or taking care of them or feeding them or watching them grow and learn and be-

“It was great to write a TV show that makes people laugh, but it was nothing compared to my children’s laughter or their hugs.”

come wonderful, amazing human beings. That mattered a lot more to me than a fat paycheck or awards. And while it’s my husband who holds down the steady, 9 to 5 corporate job, he is by no means uninvolved. He is an amazing, hands-on father who enriches our children’s lives every day with the same loving, kind and patient nature that made me fall in love with him years ago.

Are you able to find a support group as a stay-at-home dad in a gay marriage?

I was lucky. The Pop Luck Club is a group with over 250 dads and 650 kids. Every month, we have a potluck meeting where we talk to “prospective” dads about how to become fathers through surrogacy,

adoption, and fostering. Because of the Pop Luck Club (www.popluckclub.org), our kids have always grown up knowing other kids with gay parents. But, as you know, parents mostly connect with other parents through their kids, so most of our friends are straight parents.

Do you ever worry that your daughter is missing out on not having a female parent?

We’ve always tried to fill Elizabeth’s life with as many wonderful women as we can—lots of aunts and grandmothers. But especially Heather, the surrogate who carried Elizabeth, and “Miss Andrea,” both children’s egg donor. Miss Andrea took Elizabeth shop-

ping for her first bra, and we’ve stayed in close touch with all three women. Whenever we’ve asked Elizabeth if she feels like she missed out on having a mom, she has always looked at us like that was the strangest question and says no—that we’re her parents. [At this point Elizabeth chimes in to the interview: “I think two dads is better than having a mom and a dad; it’s just a lot more fun.”] In addition, we chose a female pediatrician, female teachers, an all-girl summer camp, and tried to fill her life with great female role models. It seems to have worked. She will tell anyone who asks that girls rule. ■

—Interview by S.B.

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The Age of Miracles

This sci-fi coming-of-age novel is sure to appeal to all ages.

TEEN REVIEW

By **Alyssa Solano**

The *Age of Miracles* is an account of change, but not the gradual changes to which we are accustomed. The author, Karen Thompson Walker, uses the excitement and intrigue of an unexpected and dramatically world-altering change—the gradual slowing of the Earth’s rotation—to draw readers into the narrative of Julia, a quiet middle-schooler who lives in California.

“The slowing” is used as a hook and a means of driving the story, but Walker doesn’t give an explanation for the slowing, so the event itself doesn’t seem feasible. The novel is, however, about change—personal, communal and societal change. Throughout the novel, people move in and out of Julia’s life at an alarming pace, and nothing feels permanent. In a world where tomorrow’s sunrise isn’t guaranteed, she must decide how to react to the upheaval of

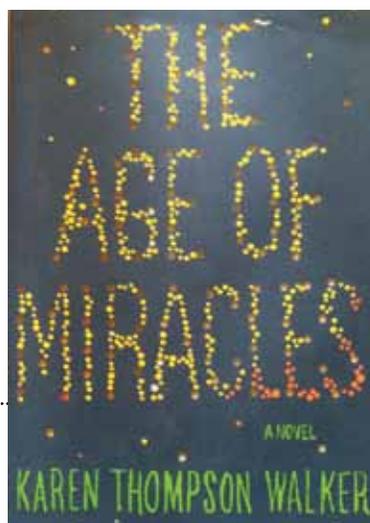
normality and the looming threat of the unknown.

Julia’s perceptiveness drives the narrative and draws the reader into the story’s events and characters. For example, Julia takes note of her father’s growing lies—which she associates with the uncertain, fearful times—and builds the theme of individual responsibility under extreme circumstance. Even in the face of sudden and unwelcome change, when a moral lapse might be understandable, we retain the ability to act deliberately and justly.

Yet, through Julia, optimism prevails. While others sow di-

vision, seek their own interests, let go of their principles, or simply give in to despair, Julia hopes. She dares to seek love. She decides to study medicine, even though the world will likely end before she will graduate. Julia’s hope is deliberate and inspiring. If in the face of her harsh reality, quiet, young Julia can hold on to hope, surely there is nothing that can crush ours. And this hope, more than any implausible sci-fi cataclysm, is a miracle.

Alyssa Solano, a senior at Gilmour Academy in Gates Mills, Ohio, plans to attend medical school and is leaning toward majoring in chemistry in college.



TEACHER REVIEW

By **Mary Poluse**

As a person who studies and teaches mathematics, I believe that some mathematics was developed as an attempt to bring order to our lives. Patterns help us survive. When do we plant crops? When do we harvest? When will the harsh weather arrive?

So, what would happen if these rhythmic patterns—the ones that we set our calendars and clocks by—no longer existed?

That’s the world of Julia, an 11-year-old California girl in Karen Thompson Walker’s *Age of Miracles*. Julia’s world is without pattern because the 24-hour day is no longer married to the rising and setting of the sun. The earth’s rotation has slowed, adding minutes, then hours, to the length of each new day.

This catastrophe, “the slowing,” causes detrimental changes to climate, plant, and animal life. As the days and nights become longer, growing crops becomes more difficult.

Julia’s outside world reads completely different than today’s middle schoolers, but her personal world is universal—voices changing from one octave to another, bodies growing rapidly over the summer, crooked teeth straightening with the help of wires, “bus stop” friends huddling together to ward off bullies, “lunch” friends eating together in the cafeteria, “team” friends playing Saturday morning soccer, “neighbor” friends sleeping over, “best” friends moving away, and that “special boy” becoming more than a friend. Additionally, Julia

is an only child whose parents are going through a rocky period in their marriage. Her childhood is slipping away.

Julia’s story is engaging and reminiscent. My own awkward middle school experiences came flooding back as I read through her confusion, sadness, joy, and ultimate growth. The story about her Earth felt disturbing and hit just a little too close to home given the warnings on global warming and species’ extinction in our own current events. I’ve become more appreciative of our constants—a beautiful sunset over a lake or a harvest moon or the universal journey of adolescence. I am grateful that I read *The Age of Miracles* and think this story is worth reading.

Mary Poluse, Ph.D., is a mathematics instructor at Gilmour Academy.



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Among the 84 members of the HB Class of 2014, one student earned a perfect score on the SAT, two had perfect ACTs, nine were named National Merit Finalists, one is a National Achievement Finalist, and nine are National Merit Commended Students. Many were awarded merit scholarships from their schools of choice, and several play collegiate-level sports.

Perspectives

reflects the full tapestry of our society: from parents, teens and professionals.

Life with Cancer

Through the Eyes of One Family

Teen 1

By **Vince Miozzi**, cancer patient

I didn't let my leukemia diagnosis upset me for long. I quickly realized that I didn't have time to be upset. With my passion for sports, I decided to treat my leukemia like a football season. Sure, I'm most likely going to get knocked down a few times and yes, probably even lose a few games, but I will ultimately beat cancer and have a winning season.

Kicking cancer was my ultimate prize, but I wanted to get my life back as fast as I could. That meant I had to educate myself, train hard, and get moving. I remember the doctor coming in my room, and I said, "Okay, you have the chemo here; let's get started." I was anxious to be a winner. I wasn't going to lose this battle.

My treatment ended up being far more horrible than I could've possibly imagined. I wasn't prepared for the intensity of the drugs and procedures, and I was blitzed with side effects, including: avascular necrosis in my knees and feet, a blood clot in my brain, a stroke, short-term memory loss, weakness in my right hand, portal hypertension, low blood platelets, an enlarged spleen, liver damage, second degree burns in my mouth and esophagus. There was pneumonia and sepsis. I developed antibodies to my own blood platelets and one of my very necessary chemo drugs. The treatment was actually killing me.



I spent endless days in the hospital, holiday after holiday. I spent one Christmas in the ICU. Some days I couldn't lift my head up from the pillow. Heck, there were days I couldn't even open my eyes, no matter how much I wanted to. There was loneliness and isolation even though my friends and family were there for me all the time. But, I felt like I was watching so much pass me by. I couldn't participate in the things I loved. I missed my family, my friends, playing football, singing in choir concerts, knowing what was going on at school. You never think you would miss eating in the school cafeteria, but I did.

I missed three years of school and had to continue my schooling through home instruction. However, through all of this, I never asked, "Why me?" I never looked back. I wanted to move forward. I was not going to give cancer the satisfaction. The harder it hit me, the harder I fought back. I had to retreat and regroup a lot. I always made a new game plan and tried to come out swinging (difficult when you are too weak to lift your arms). I had to reroute my passion for football to helping coach the team. I put renewed passion into my love of singing and performing. I had time to pursue my interest in history and see it lead me to an interest in politics.

Thanks to the love and support of all of my friends, family, doctors, nurses, church, and teachers, I feel completely back to normal. I never fell far behind in school. My school didn't let me skip a beat, and I remained on the honor roll.

I am a senior now and have been back in school since the start of junior year. My college applications are complete, and I turned 18 last week. I feel good about the future, short- and long-term. I'm still setting goals and looking forward. When you see my name on a ballot soon, I hope you will cast your vote for me.

Parent 1

By Frank Miozzi, father

How can I possibly communicate in 500 words or less how my child's diagnosis with leukemia changed my life? I'm certain this



attempt won't convey the devastation I felt in being unable to "protect" Vince from the misery he endured during treatment. Why must he suffer so? Why couldn't I take this burden away from him? Why did I feel so insufficient? These things all stripped the joy from my life.

I told myself—persevere, stay positive for him, my wife, and the other children—but the cancer was relentless. The bad news seemed to come again and again, and I didn't want the toll to show. I didn't want my wife to have something else to worry about. The other kids had it hard enough, but I didn't want to tell them I didn't have the energy for them.

The guilt compounded the stress. I felt I was letting my son down. Why couldn't I fix this? I felt I was letting my wife down. Why couldn't I comfort her more? I felt I was letting my other kids down. Why did things have to be so different? I felt I was letting my friends down. "You've changed," they'd say. They didn't get it; co-workers didn't get it. Work didn't matter, but it did. I had to continue to provide for my family.

It seemed impossible to do enough or say the right things, but I told myself to keep trying. Persevere, persevere, but it

just wasn't possible to do it all. I had to sever some relationships—there just wasn't time for them anymore. I missed them though, which brought on more guilt.

The relentless treatment for leukemia went on for years, and no one can prepare for that. I lived with fear all of the time. Will he live through tomorrow? Is he truly feeling better or just being strong? Will he tell me what he's feeling or hide it from me? Will I see the signs if he starts to give up the fight? Will I miss the signs that my wife or kids can't bear it any longer?

I pushed on. The days passed, and they'd tell us the cancer was gone, but couldn't say for how long. I didn't dare return to life as normal. Normal didn't exist anymore. I couldn't afford to let my guard down again, but I still had to get my family past this.

There were a few joyful moments, like when my kids played happily together, but questions followed those, too. Will there be more? How many? I hated that the cancer seemed ever-present, even in the joy.

Yes, cancer changed our life forever. But, I had to make the best of it—for Vince, for my wife, for the other kids, but the fact remains—I hate cancer.

Parent 2

By Katy Miozzi, mother

Childhood Cancer: these two words don't ever belong together.

Within minutes of hearing that my child had cancer, the disbelief began. How could my smart, athletic, always healthy, altar boy, church choir singer, friend to everyone, kind brother, and respectful son have cancer? Talk about life not being fair. Aren't there some bad boys out there who deserve something like this more than my boy? No way was I going to let cancer take him from me.

The treatment for boys with Vince's type of leukemia is a 3-1/2 year treatment plan. Honestly, it's barbaric. The drugs are horrible and produce many difficult side effects. From the onset, chemotherapy didn't agree with Vince, and brought issues like the inability to eat or drink, blood clots, stroke, and bone loss. He still deals with liver damage, portal hypertension, and chronically low blood platelets from the chemo.

Adults know that the desire to fight a cancer diagnosis is not always enough. The willingness to fight cancer with mental toughness, tenacity, spirit, and will doesn't always win. One of my saddest moments was when Vince realized this. Childhood was over. I don't know another cancer parent who wouldn't change places with their child in a heartbeat. The indignity of cancer is not for children, but Vince had to learn it all the same.

Cancer is beyond difficult on family life. Vince is our oldest of five children. We couldn't pack up our other four kids and put them on a shelf until Vince was well. They needed love and nurturing; they still needed our attention and they needed their brother. They were frightened for Vince and could see we were too. We always tried to talk to them as honestly as possible about issues with Vince and his treatment.

Parents have little time for themselves, much less their relationship, while their child is in treatment. Frank and I tried to support each other and face each day as a team, although we spent most of our rare together time at the hospital. The stress of medical ex-

penses and insurance issues for three plus years of treatment requires a whole separate article, but suffice it to say that our marriage and family remain intact because we wanted it to. We took turns holding hands, holding things together, and holding each other up. Sometimes it was Frank, me, or one of our kids keeping it real to hold us together. Sometimes, it was Vince.

Despite the harsh reality of a cancer diagnosis at 13, Vince didn't leave himself much time for self-pity. He was all about kicking cancer and taking his life back. Vince has always been a goal setter, so he set a plan to get through treatment each day. When he suffered a setback, he'd calmly step back, regroup, and set a new goal for his plan. Sure, he reacted to disappointment, but he always landed with a new plan to face his treatment and get well. I have watched him selflessly share his story with others to offer them hope, support, and friendship. I've never witnessed Vince complain or ask, "Why me?"

Vince prioritized school when he was well enough, and he will graduate on time with his class of 2015 in May. He's worked hard physically and emotionally and knows what he needs to do to be healthy. He's kept up with his old friends and made new ones. Last week, Vince turned 18. We're so proud of the man he's become. Vince doesn't look back or wallow in the unfairness of his past. Every day, he wakes up and moves forward. So, to keep up with him, I do too.

Sibling 1

By Norm Miozzi, age 16

When Vince got cancer, I didn't really know what it meant other than it was this horrible illness that wrote characters off of TV shows. Cancer had no meaning in my life; it didn't affect me personally. But after his diagnosis, I began to realize how dangerous cancer was—how it hurt Vince and changed our whole family.

Vince was immediately sicker. He wasn't the older brother I knew just weeks before. He no longer shared our room or teased me. He wasn't around to do any of the things that we used to



do together—no throwing the football, tossing the lax ball, no shooting hoops in the driveway, and staying up late to watch TV.

For over three years, Vince was gone, and my parents were gone all of the time, too. My dad went to work and stayed overnight at the hospital, and my mom only came home to sleep and get us ready for school in the morning. I was in charge in our house whenever they weren't home.

As a 12-year-old seventh grader, I wasn't very mature, but I didn't have the option of irresponsibility. My three younger siblings needed me, especially with my parents gone and my brother near death. And, it wasn't like babysitting while my mom went to the grocery store. The little kids were scared about Vince and missed my parents. I had to check homework, find pajamas, serve dinner, clean up, play a lot of Candy Land, watch endless episodes of Dora the Explorer, and tuck Luke and Eileen in bed.

I didn't like this job, but it sure seemed better than what Vince was dealing with. I didn't want to stress my parents and make them ask me to help. I wanted to just jump in and help, but I didn't always know what that was. It wasn't an easy time.

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Along with the responsibilities I wasn't prepared for, I also had to face all of Vince's friends. Vince and I went to the same school and every day I saw all of his friends, but he wasn't with them anymore. They were all concerned with how he was doing, but they didn't realize that every time I saw them or they brought up his name, I was reminded of how he wouldn't be coming back home for a while and how sick he was.

Also, going to football practice after school was hard without Vince. The seventh and eighth grade football teams practiced on the same field, and his absence reminded me of his condition. It was hard knowing that I could still do the things Vince loved to do, lived to do—like play football—and may never do again. I felt like I had to play for both of us, and when I didn't start, I felt as though I failed him. Even when I didn't like football, I felt like I couldn't quit because I would disappoint Vince and my parents.

Vince's illness affected me greatly, especially emotionally. I did what I could to stay strong and help my siblings, who were also going through a rough time. I needed to support them, even though I wanted someone to take care of me while I was sad. So even though I didn't show

my feelings much on the outside, I was scared for Vince and all of us. I missed Vince every day, even when he was home and so sick he couldn't interact much with us. I missed our family—the way we were before cancer.

Keeping my emotions to myself was how I handled things for three long years. Even now, it's hard to talk about. I much prefer to focus on how healthy Vince is now and the times we are sharing together in high school.

Sibling 2

By Bridget Miozzi, age 14

I try never to think back to the day that Vince was diagnosed with cancer, but I find myself thinking about it often. It was September 3, 2010, and I had just started fifth grade. My parents found out and had to rush Vince down to the hospital immediately.

As they tell it, they planned to come home later that night and sit down with my brother Norm and me to explain what leukemia was and what was going on. They'd told only a few people to make sure that someone was taking care of us for the evening, but the news went viral at the Solon Comets game a few hours later. I got a text message from my friend, Jackie, who moved away to Columbus in first grade, but we never lost touch. It said, "Hey, I'm so sorry about your brother." I wondered how she knew Vince had to go to the hospital for some tests after school but replied, "Thanks." Jackie texted back, "I just can't believe Vince has cancer." I dropped my phone.

My world has never been the same since. My parents hadn't planned for me to find out that way; so many people knew and loved Vince that the news just got out so fast. Food kept showing up at the back door, and our mailbox overflowed with cards. There was always someone visiting or bringing something for Vince. I just wanted to be alone with my family, but my parents were with Vince so much. I wondered if I would ever feel normal again.

Norm and I took on a lot of responsibility at home. My parents needed

to be with Vince at the hospital, and it seemed that just when he got to come home, he would have to go right back. I would bring Vince food and drinks when he needed and help entertain Luke and Eileen.

I felt helpless watching Vince get so sick. I would have done anything to help Vince get better. I wanted to give him bone marrow, but my parents told me that wasn't being considered for Vince just then.

I never believed something like this would happen to my family. It's something you see on the news or in the movies, but it shouldn't happen in real life to innocent people. It was such a hard time for my family and a lonely and frightening time for me. I lived in fear of losing Vince and our family changing forever. I have a lot of good friends who were there for me when I needed to talk and when I didn't want to talk.

Vince fought hard and is healthy today. He has some ongoing medical problems, but you would never know it when you look at him. Vince, Norm, and I are all in high school together this year. Vince is a senior and more involved than most of the upper classmen I know. We are all in Show Choir together, and if I call him out on something that I know his doctor and my mom have said not to do, he ignores me. That makes things feel normal again. Not the "new normal" everyone says you will find when you are going through cancer but a different normal. It's normal that we are all together again and can tease each other, ignore each other, fight with each other, and just hang out together. A meal with my brothers at Chipotle is more than just a meal at Chipotle. It's the normal we all wanted to find again.

Sometimes life throws things at you that you don't expect or deserve. My family's experience has taught me how lucky I am to wake up healthy every day and how important it is to appreciate what you have and all the people in your life.

Cancer was a horrible thing that happened to Vince and to my whole family. Although I wish it never happened, words can't describe how grateful I am that he is still here with me today.



What Teens Are Saying About Alternative Highs

Is *Your* Child Part of the Majority?



According to the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey* less than 24% of high school students in **SAY–Social Advocates for Youth** districts used marijuana in the past 30 days. And only a third used alcohol. The **majority** of students surveyed **do not use alcohol or other drugs**. Their alternative highs include running, cheerleading, drawing, basketball, and reading.

That's why there is an increasing interest among students to get to know **SAY**, the free program that educates and empowers teens to minimize risky behavior while making healthy/good choices.

* YRBS is administered by SAY with the assistance and oversight of the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University. The full report is available at www.e-say.org.

Student Leadership Council

Is your teen a part of the majority? Does she enjoy learning leadership skills? Would he like to work with students from area schools to develop campaigns on topics effecting teens? SAY's Student Leadership Council is a program for students in grades 9 through 12 where teens share ideas, volunteer and make a difference.

SAY A Program of Bellefaire JCB
SocialAdvocatesforYouth

For information and questions:

Nancy Schaumburg, LISW-S, SAY Coalition Coordinator
(216) 320-8469 • schaumburn@bellefairejcb.org
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SAY – Social Advocates for Youth is a school-based prevention and early intervention program of Bellefaire JCB for students in middle and high school. SAY services are offered in eight east suburban school districts in Cuyahoga County: Beachwood, Chagrin Falls, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Mayfield, Orange, Shaker Heights, Solon and South Euclid-Lyndhurst.

Sibling 3

By Luke Miozzi, age 11

I was so sad when my brother, Vince, got cancer. I was worried when he couldn't eat anything, and I was scared every time he went back to the hospital. Every day, when I got home from school, the first thing I did was check on Vince. I wanted to see if he needed anything and make sure he hadn't gone back to the hospital while I was at school.

When Vince found out he had cancer, he was in the hospital for a very long time. I was only six years old. It was so hard for me and I cried a lot. I cried at night and couldn't always fall asleep when Vince wasn't home because I was so worried about him.

He looked very sick whenever I did see him. He was always so tired and had a hard time walking, sometimes. It was scary to see Vince look so sick because he is our oldest brother. Norm was 12, Bridget was 10, and Eileen was three. We helped take care of him as best as we could.

I worried most when he was in the hospital, and we couldn't visit him. Sometimes,

we could go see him, and other times he was too sick for us to go. I am the worrier, so this was hardest for me. I had to see Vince to know he was all right.

But when I did see him, he didn't always look alright, so really, I just worried all the time. For a very long time, Vince couldn't get out of bed, except to go to the bathroom or doctors appointments. Sometimes, he couldn't even talk very much, and it was hard for him to tell us when he needed something.

I remember feeling scared every day at school. I didn't know what might be happening to Vince while I was there. I felt nervous a lot, but all of the teachers at school were very nice, cheered me up, and helped me calm down. A lot of the teachers knew Vince, so they were scared for him too.

One thing I remember the most is when we had a tornado warning. Mom and Dad had taken Bridget and Norm somewhere, and Vince was home, but he was very weak and sick. He spent a lot of days in bed. We were always all so happy when he could come downstairs and be on the couch with us for a while because we knew Vince



was having a better day. This day, he came downstairs with pillows and blankets and took Eileen and me to the basement. It was so loud and scary—the thunder and lightning and wind wouldn't stop—and it was black outside. I think the house was shaking, too. Vince covered us up and held us tight until it was over. He protected us, even though he was very sick that day. He made

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sure we were safe and didn't get hurt.

I know he loves us all so much, but that day I really knew it because he used all of his energy to keep us safe. That day reminds me of how much I love him.

We all still worry about Vince. Sometimes, I even still check on him if he takes a rest during the day. I wonder what would have happened if Vince never got cancer.

We got Vince through all of his bad times, and I knew we would. I know we can do it again, but I pray that this is something we never have to do. Ever. But like I said, we can.

Sibling 4

By Eileen Miozzi, age 8

It was hard when Vince was diagnosed with leukemia. He had to go to the hospital and live there, which meant less mommy and daddy time for me. They almost lived there, too. They would come home to see me, but they always had to go right back to take care of Vince. Sometimes he could be at home, and our whole family could be together. But then we couldn't have friends over or make too much noise.

Even when he was home, Vince might end up back in the hospital. Sometimes he just went for a check up, and the doctor would say, "Sorry Vince, but you have to stay in the hospital again." They gave him all kinds of medicine in shots and pills and in bags. The medicine made him sicker than the cancer did.

I was really little then and couldn't stay by myself. Everyone else was in school. Every day after my preschool, a different mom would take me home to play at her house until my own mom came home. Many times, my grandma would pick me up from one of the moms. A lot of the moms had dogs and snacks and kids to play with. Mrs. Brady let me bake a dolphin birthday cake with her on my real birthday.

Sometimes, when I didn't have school, a mom would pick me up at home so that my mom could help the nurses watch Vince. If Vince was doing okay, I got to come help my mom watch him. I got to take naps next to him and bring him snacks. The best part was when he would fall asleep, and my mom would take me to McDonalds, and we would sit next to a giant fish tank and eat.



We all felt bad for Vince because he loved football, and he couldn't play it with cancer. He couldn't go to games or play anything outdoors. I made him a lot of cards and pictures to cheer him up. He loves the Ronald Reagan pictures I drew for him.

Three years later, Vince became a cancer survivor! He was 16, and he could drive. He became the Young Man of the Year and did a long interview at our house. We got to play with Vince in our backyard and hug him when they did the interview. When it was done, we got to watch it, but I wasn't in it.

I still hug Vince every day, anyway. We all hug him, but I hug him the most. ■

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— Dr. Deborah Gilboa, author of *Get the Behavior You Want . . . Without Being the Parent You Hate*

IT'S THEIR JOURNEY, NOT YOURS

BY JESSICA LAHEY | PHOTOS BY BETH SEGAL

The hundred or so parents and teens packed into the small high school cafeteria lounge were nominally assembled for a track information session, to meet the coaches and discuss logistics. However, as the coaches quickly discovered when they tried to bring the meeting to order, the parents had another agenda. The meeting was scheduled smack in the middle of early decision notification week, when students who have applied exclusively to their first choice school find out if they've been admitted, so there was lots of hand wringing and Monday morning quarterbacking to be done.

On our way out the door, my teenage son pointed back at the scrum of anxious parents gathered in the cafeteria, leaned over, and whispered in my ear, “Promise you won’t do that to me, okay?”

He didn’t have to explain what he meant. The parents were overwrought, their children looked miserable, and it took us every minute of our long walk to the car to shake off the secondhand stress and hysteria we’d absorbed during that hour in the cafeteria.

I know the parents in that room well; we live in a small town, and I taught a fair number of their children when they were in middle and high school. Consequently, I have advised some of their kids on their college essays and counseled some of these parents on the importance of giving kids more autonomy and responsibility. I’m the one who reminds them that applying to college is their child’s job. I’m the one who gently scolds when they use the possessive pronoun “our” rather than “his” or “hers” in reference to their child’s common application essay. I’m the one they call the night of the application deadline with “one more question” about “our” essay.

And here’s what I tell them.

College is their journey, not yours.

From the first day of kindergarten, we train our children to perform in exchange for rewards: they give us compliance, attention, and effort, and we hand down grades, honors, and gold stars. Consequently, we teach them to value rewards more than learning, and after twelve years of this nonsense, many

students find they have lost touch with wonder and curiosity, let alone any sense of ownership over their education. And when it comes to motivation and learning, ownership is everything.

As Edward Deci explains in his brilliant book *Why We Do What We Do*, we all need to experience three things in order to be motivated and invested in a pursuit: autonomy, competence, and connection. In other words, we need to feel as if we have control over our lives, our goals, and the actions we take to achieve those goals. We need to know that we are capable of achieving our goals, and finally, we need to feel as if we have the support of others around us.

These three things lead to intrinsic motivation, motivation that comes from within. Intrinsic motivation is what makes kids stick with a project for hours on end without eating, distraction, or pause, and it’s what endures after the ‘A’s, the honors, and the gold stars stop flowing.

Choosing a college is a highly personal decision, and there’s no better way to give your teenager autonomy than by al-

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lowing him or her to take the lead in the college selection and application process.

Sure, you will have to write some checks for application fees, but keep your hands—and your pen—off that application. Trust me, they need the practice.

I've watched students struggle to fill out forms in class, and I can testify that many kids are barely able to properly address an envelope, let alone fill out a full application. Let them get some experience with paperwork if for no other reason than they need to know how. Requesting college catalogs, downloading applications, untangling proprietary applications from common apps, selecting and soliciting the teachers for recommendations—all of this should be your teenager's responsibility.

Besides, your teens are much more likely to feel invested and engaged on their first day of college if they have had a hand in all the small responsibilities and tasks that got them there, if they feel competent in the small details of functioning in the big, bad world.

Competence not confidence; it's much more. Plenty of kids have confidence in their abilities based on years of parents' effusive praise, but confidence is hollow and unreliable, deceptive stuff. Competence, however, can be counted on. Competence is dependable, made up of real-world trial, error, and hard-won victories.

Too often, kids don't get the chance to build their sense of competence because we make them too comfortable, substituting our competence for theirs with our helicoptering and over-parenting. The only way to build competence is through experience, and it is

vital that kids have some room to fail at some endeavors so they can figure out how to recover and emerge victorious in the end.

If you feel you must take some part in the application process, make sure it's a background role. Help them set alarms in their calendars so they get reminders ahead of deadlines. Help them strategize a Plan B when Plan A falls through, but do not nag, do not micromanage, and do not intervene in communications with teachers, administrators, and college admissions officers.

Even as you step back and allow your teens to experience autonomy and competence, they still need to sense your presence, knowing that you remain connected to them, if out of their way. This does not mean that you should jump in and save them from their missteps. On the contrary—rescuing, nagging, reminding, and micromanaging undermine the emotional connection we all work so hard to establish with our children.

Our teens need to know we have their backs and trust in their ability to head out into the world and make it on their own. Our job, as parents, is to teach our kids everything they need to know so they don't need us anymore.

As we approached the car, and opened our respective doors, I looked over the roof of the car at my gangling, oversized kid. I tapped my hand on the roof of the car to draw his attention away from his iPhone.

"Hey," I said, and held his gaze for an extra moment or two when he looked up, in our long-understood "I'm being serious, so listen to me," look.

"I promise," I said, and he smiled, knowing I meant it. ■

COLLEGE PREP

DOs and DON'Ts

When your child is in middle school...

✓ Do understand that middle school is the training ground for high school, so after these 2-3 years, the goal is for your adolescent to be able to handle school—academics and otherwise—*mostly* on his or her own.

✗ Don't continue to play the same role you did in elementary school, where you were in charge of most (all) aspects of your student's world—including making that world "right" when problems arose at school, during activities, and with peers.

When your teen is a freshman...

✓ Do recognize that freshman year is a transitional period in which your adolescent is figuring out how to handle the stepped-up demands—academic and otherwise—of high school. Try to let her handle this mostly on her own and don't worry too much about grades unless they plummet. Also encourage your student to pursue a couple of extracurriculars that she enjoys and chooses.

✗ Don't launch into freshman year—and the rest of high school for that matter—as if it's day No. 1 of the race to college. Don't demand stellar grades in the most rigorous classes, while piling on extracurriculars, because, "everything counts."

When your teen is a sophomore...

✓ Do encourage your teenager to take a course load that is challenging for her (not worrying about what other students are taking) and electives she finds interesting. That means courses should require your teenager to work hard, but they should not overwhelm her to the point of earning poor grades (Cs and Ds) or requiring hours of outside tutoring.

✗ Don't believe that, when it comes to getting into college, more is more by loading your sophomore's schedule with advanced classes and a resume's worth of extracurriculars. Don't allow your teenager to burn the midnight oil night after night. Don't continue to "fix" problems for your teenager, at school, with peers, coaches, and so on.

When your teen is a junior...

✓ Do recognize that junior year is the toughest year of high school. This is the year admissions officers will scrutinize most closely when it comes to determining whether your student should earn a spot at their campus. Continue to encourage a challenging course load, as well as the couple of extracurriculars your teenager enjoys. This year, your teenager will also get some official scores on record by taking either the ACT or the SAT (or both).

✗ What can we say but refer back to sophomore year.

When your teen is a senior...

✓ Welcome to the year in which your teenager will apply—and get accepted—to college! Get out your pompoms because your most important role this year is to be your student's biggest cheerleader throughout the college admissions process. Provide support by helping your teenager (together with his counselor) develop a list of colleges that are a "right" fit academically, socially and financially. Support him as he fills out and submits the applications and believe in your heart that your teenager can be successful where ever he goes to college.

✗ Don't convince yourself that your teenager will only be successful if she attends an elite university.

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Paying for College

Make affordability part of the process

With the sticker price at some colleges now topping \$50,000 a year, it's no surprise so many parents are worried about how they will afford their teenager's tuition bill.

But here's the good news. Most students don't pay anywhere near the sticker price for their college education. In fact, today, the average student at a private, four-year college pays only about half that price, according to a recent survey by the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

"The sticker price is just like a sticker price for a car. What you see on the windshield is not necessarily what you are going to pay," says Rob Kron, head of Investment and Retirement Education for BlackRock, an investment management firm based in New York City. "A student's unique situation and the schools they are applying to will determine how much of a discount they will receive."

Do Your Homework

So, how can you ensure your student doesn't pay the sticker price, especially if you're a higher-income household? The first step is to acquaint yourself with the two kinds of financial aid colleges offer, namely **merit aid** and **need-based aid**.

Merit aid is money awarded to applicants based on merit, typically a strong academic performance in high school. Need-based aid is awarded to applicants based on financial need and is mostly determined by household income. Students in households with higher incomes won't qualify for much, if any, need-based aid. But they can qualify for merit aid.

Note that how much need-based and merit aid colleges offer differs from one institution to the next. Some offer no merit aid—that includes the Ivies and many other top-tier institutions—while others offer a lot of merit aid. Some meet 100 percent of need-based aid, while others meet a much lower percentage.

As your teenager decides which colleges to apply to, it's important to make sure those colleges will offer your teenager the kind of aid (merit or need-based) that will discount your tuition bill, says BlackRock's Kron. You can determine what kind of aid your teenager will likely receive from a particular college with what's called a Net Price Calculator.

"The federal government mandates that any school that receives federal funding has a Net Price Calculator on its website," explains Kron. "You provide information about yourself and your student and the Net Price Calculator will show you



Photo: Beth Segal

what the average fees, room and board, transportation, and personal expenses are for students like yours at that school. That gives you an idea of your total cost of attendance."

Note, that this is an approximation of what your student is likely to pay to attend that school. You won't know for sure until your teenager gets in and receives his or her official financial aid package.

"But it gives you a cost you can start to plan around," explains Kron. "And if you don't complete this exercise before submitting the application, you may find, you didn't apply anywhere that you can actually afford to go."

Filling the Gap

Even with discounts, most families will still have a tuition bill to pay. And let's face it, even

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if your teenager scores the average 50-or-so percent discount, that can still leave you on the hook for \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year at a private four-year college.

“You have to be realistic about what you can do as a family,” Kron says. “Right up front, as you go through the process of putting schools on this list, you talk about the chance of getting in, as well as the chance of being able to pay for it.”

That includes what you (parents) can afford to pay toward tuition (from savings and income), as well as the amount of debt (student loans) your teenager should take on. Be cautious about allowing your teenager to assume more debt than she can comfortably repay after graduation.

“If you look at the average starting salary, which is around \$45,000, how much debt is manageable? A general rule is that you don’t want to have more than 10 percent of your monthly income taken up by a student loan payment,” explains Kron. For \$45,000, that 10 percent is around \$300 a month (or around \$50,000 in student loan debt).

Meanwhile, if your teenager is passionate about a career in a field with lower entry-level salaries—say teaching—or plans to pursue a costly graduate degree—say medicine or law—then your teenager’s debt will need to be that much lower at graduation (see chart, The True Cost of Debt).

“You can’t really know what your teenager is going to make coming out of college, so why would you want to set them up for an unsustainable debt burden?” Kron advises.

Even Modest Savings Help

So far we’ve covered two sources of paying for college: merit and need-based aid and student loans. The last piece of the puzzle is savings.

To be sure, saving for a college education can feel overwhelming. Even with aid, it’s a lot of money. But, stresses Kron, even modest amounts of savings can help. “Every dollar you save, regardless of when you start saving, is creating that much more opportunity for your child. It’s allowing one more school to be on that affordable list. It’s one more career decision that wasn’t influenced by, ‘Oh, I’ve got to make a certain amount of money to service this debt.’”

Approach savings by taking into account the years until your teenager goes to college, as well as the four or five years he

THE TRUE COST OF DEBT

Source: Black Rock

Student Loan Amount	Payment per Month*	Comfortable Gross Salary**
\$25,000	\$131	\$15,720
\$50,000	\$322	\$38,640
\$75,000	\$575	\$69,000
\$100,000	\$793	\$95,160
\$150,000	\$1,162	\$139,440

Average Salary at Graduation = **\$45,000**

*Based on 25 year term Government Loan, 3.86%, 1.072% fee for the first \$31,000 (Max Stafford Unsubsidized Loan Amnt). Additional Loan Amnt over \$31,000 is on a 25 year Private Loan at 9%, no fees. **Based on loan payment 10% of gross salary Source: Salary survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2013

or she will be a student. “Say you’ve got a freshman in high school and you haven’t saved anything for them. It’s not game over,” notes Kron. “It’s four years before they get to school and four years while they are in school. That’s eight years.”

Among the most popular ways to save for college is what’s called a 529 plan. Think of it as an IRA for your teenager’s education. Money you put into a 529 grows tax-free—and if you use the money saved in a 529 plan for a qualified education expense, those withdrawals are tax-free too. Qualified expenses include tuition, room and board, and even books and other supplies.

“Say you save \$5,000 in this account. While the money remains in the account,

you don’t have to pay taxes on any interest you earn from the account. But if that \$5,000 was sitting in any other type of account, you would have to pay taxes on earnings,” explains Kron.

Some parents worry that saving for college will penalize them when it comes to getting financial aid from a college. Not true, adds Kron. “Parents should keep in mind that the largest component of the financial aid formula is parents’ income. For the most part, that is what’s going to determine whether or not they will qualify for need-based financial aid.” ■

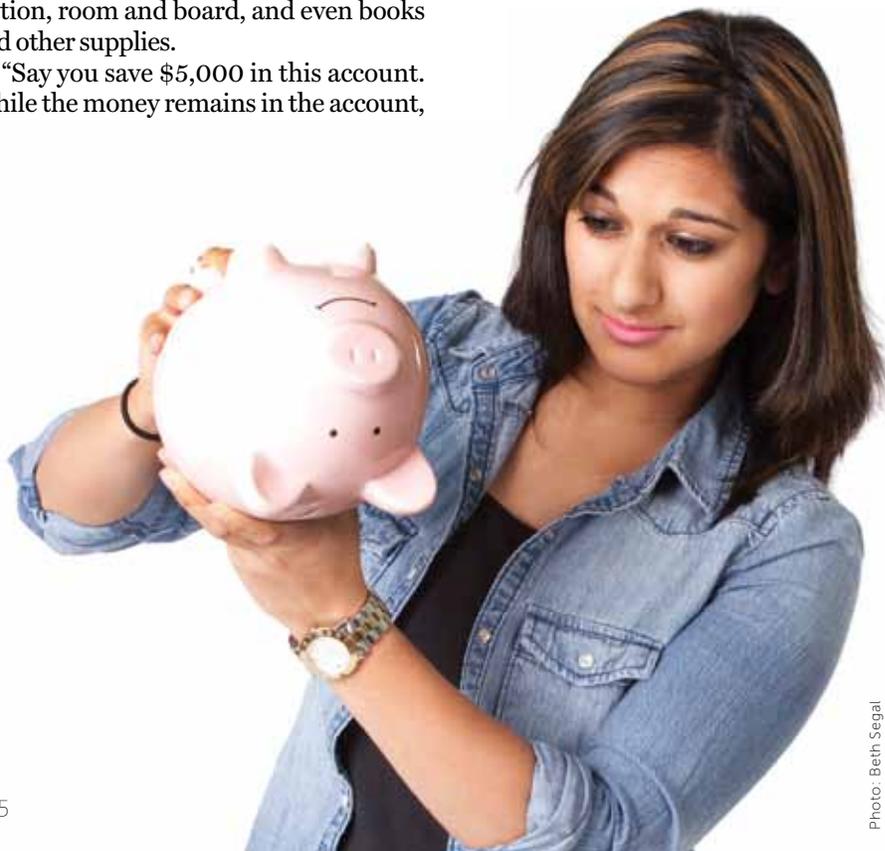


Photo: Beth Segal



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ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT

As founder of College Liftoff, Aaron Greene has helped thousands of teenagers find a college that fits academically, socially and financially.

How do you approach college admissions?

It's really a lesson in consumerism. You are buying a big asset. We haven't thought of college like that, but it's too expensive not to. Look at it in three areas: academics, finances, and fit. Is this school really the best place for what your student wants to study? Will the money line up? What's the best setting for your student?

Where should parents start?

Start with your student. What's her interest? What are her goals for her education? That's a tough question. Your teenager is 17 or 18 years old, so, the question isn't, "What do you want to do with your life?" That's not the right question to ask a teenager. It's, "What excites you?" If you can find out what interests your teenager, what gets her going, then you can start to align that to careers and majors.

What do you think about parents suggesting majors for their kids?

Forcing your student into a particular major is absolutely the wrong thing to do. I understand parents want what's best for their student, but pushing a student into something that he or she is not built for or is uncomfortable with is a waste of money. Your teenager probably won't do it after graduation. But the real downside is that he'll graduate disgruntled and prepared for something that is not for him. Listen to what your kids say about what they want to do and develop that. It's not about what you want; it's about your teenager's best path.

How does knowing a major—or possible major—help with the college decision?

It helps you determine value. The student shouldn't have more debt than her ca-

reer can repay. For example, a \$30,000 entry-level job doesn't allow that student to repay \$80,000 in debt, starting just months after graduation. So, if your student wants to major in English, then what are some potential careers? What are your student's secondary skills? Maybe she has some business or technical aptitudes. Maybe it's technical communication or marketing. These are skills we can put into real world career paths. Once you determine those interests, find schools that have outstanding programs, fit your student, and line up financially. Remember: big-name schools aren't necessarily the best value. Say you have an extremely bright kid who wants to be an engineer and who gets into an Ivy League school. Well, those aren't the best schools for engineering. The best schools for engineering are in the Midwest.

What is the student's role? And the parents'?

In addition to everything we've talked about, the student's job is to complete all of the application materials and ensure they're sent, including test scores and transcripts. The parents' role is to be supportive and help answer the financial questions.

How?

One important job for parents is to put together a budget. Before you start picking colleges, you need to decide exactly how much you'll pay for your child's education annually. Then figure how much debt your student can assume and how much can they pay themselves? We usually say they'll pay \$3,000 to \$4,000, which is about the equivalent of a work-study.

Your budget needs to be a hard number, so that you can run the numbers as you start getting aid packages



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from colleges. If your budget is \$18,000 a year and a school will cost you \$22,000 a year after financial aid, well then the school needs to come up with \$4,000 or it's not viable. So you go back to the school, and you say, 'If you want this student, we need that \$4,000.'

In some families, this may be the first serious conversation about money.

Yes, and the conversation should be there from the start of this process. It's a lesson in fiscal responsibility—not overspending when you shouldn't be, especially with college because it's so much money. Talk about the realities of graduating with a lot of debt. Teens appreciate it when you give them the reality of what's happening to some students and what you're looking to avoid. These are the realities of being an adult and making good decisions. ■



Photo: Beth Segal

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TEEN SPEAK BY REBEKAH CAMP

How Can I Pay It All Back?

My family never had very much money. I knew that coming in to college; I knew it would be difficult. I just didn't know it would be this difficult.

I decided to go to Case Western Reserve University for a few reasons. First, I couldn't handle going to the same college as my high school peers. I needed to separate myself from the toxicity and incompetence of that environment. I'd applied to schools that were out of the area (and mostly out of state), and though I got into every college I applied to, two schools stood out because of their financial aid package. When I stepped onto the CWRU campus, I knew this was my home. I belonged here.

For the first two years, I was able to earn the \$2,000-\$3,000 I owed CWRU after financial aid without sacrificing grades and study time. I managed to pay everything and move on to the next semester without

much incident. This semester, I've run into a greater problem and am facing the possibility of taking a semester or more away from college because I can't afford the remainder of this year's tuition bill.

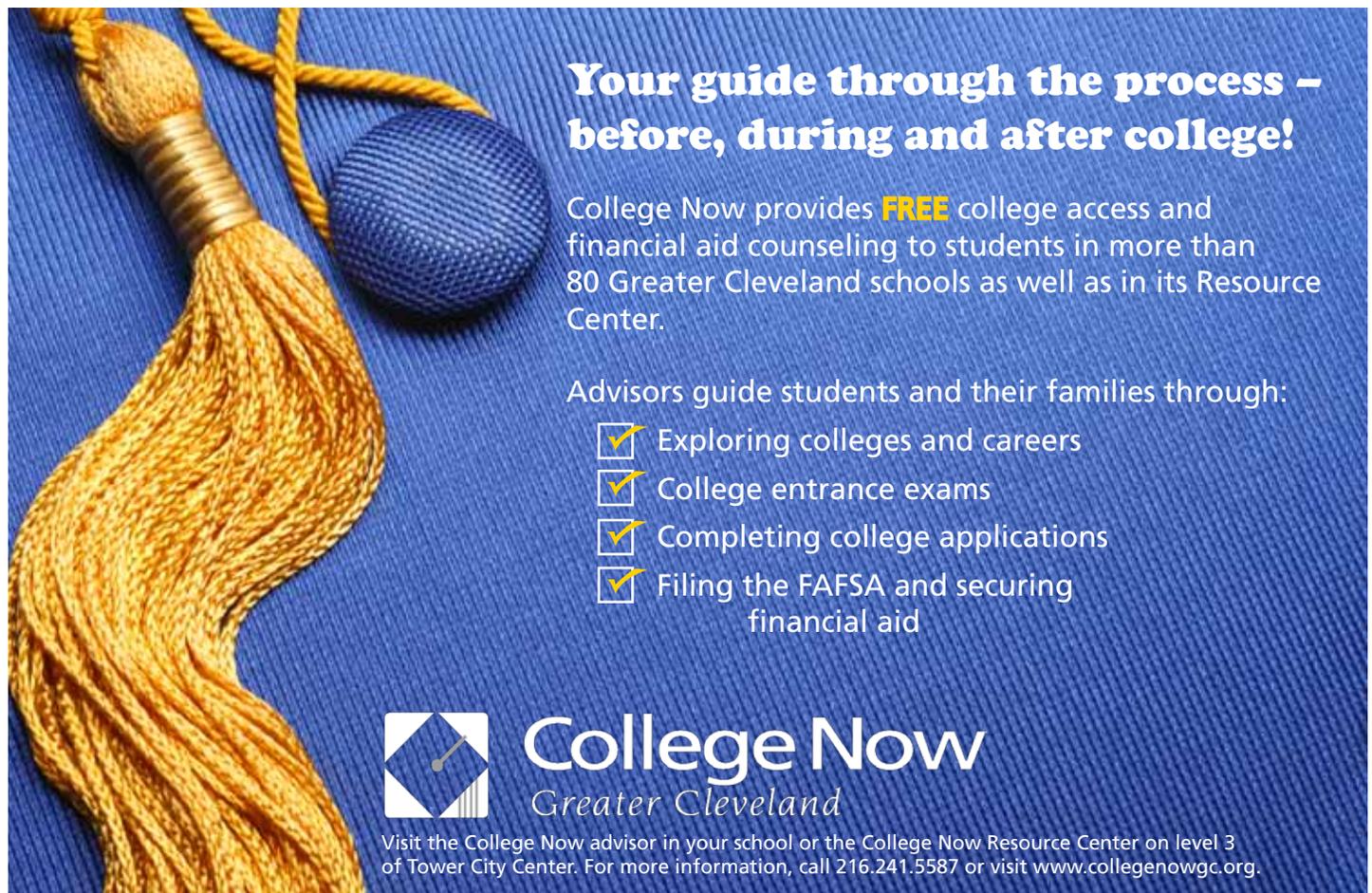
This is due, in large part, to my parents not accepting the relatively small loans (compared to the loans I've had to take) outlined in my financial aid package. My parents are divorced, and neither can assist very much out of pocket. My dad doesn't really talk to me about his financial situation, so I don't know whether he can't or won't help. My financial package doesn't take into account his finances. My mother is unemployed and is worried about whether she can pay back the loans she's already taken, let alone the one for this semester.

Because of all of this, I've had to take out yet another loan through the university, which may or may not even be enough to allow me to stay in school.

So, here's the question: If I can barely afford to be in school, even with all of the financial aid, how am I supposed to pay back all the money that I borrowed to get this degree that may or may not land me a job worth the amount of money I invested? I'm at the point where moving out of the country after finishing college looks like the most viable option because then I won't have to repay my loans. Before I think about any of that, though, I need to finish my education, which I'm not sure I'll even be able to do at this point.

The saddest part about all of this is it doesn't even matter what kind of grades you get anymore. It just matters how much money you make in a world where you can't make money without the education that you can't afford.

Rebekah Camp is from Youngsville, Pennsylvania. She's a junior at Case Western Reserve University, majoring in Film Studies and Screenwriting.

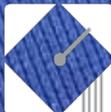



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SELF-DEFENSE

Talking safety with teenagers

By Laura Putre

Sometimes, with all the risks and dangers out there, being a teen can seem like being a moving target. Studies estimate that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. Meanwhile, every year, more than 700,000 students ages 12 to 18 are physically attacked at school, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

So what can parents do to protect their teens out in the world, especially as they head off to college? It can't hurt to consider self-defense classes offered through the local police department or a local karate or Tae Kwon Do studio, says Brian Van Brunt, a child and adolescent therapist who directs the counseling center at Western Kentucky University. Self-defense programs like IMPACT and RAD (Rape Aggression Defense) teach the importance of being aware of your surroundings and using all your resources (yelling "No!" or kicking and punching) to deter or stop an attacker.

But such classes are only part of the solution, says Van Brunt. It's important for adults to proactively talk to their teenagers, not only about how to protect themselves in dangerous situations but also how to avoid those situations in the first place. "You want to have the conversation before the problem occurs," he says. "I like to use this example—if you're a police officer or firefighter, you don't want to train at the moment when you're responding to a bank robbery or putting out a fire."

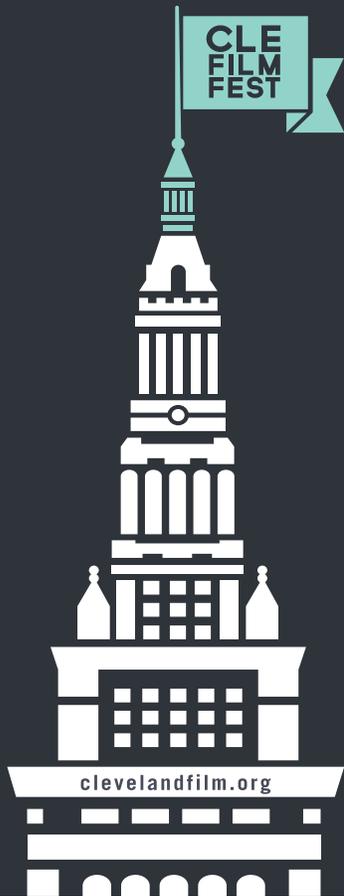
Steven L. Pastyrnak, Ph.D., and division chief of pediatric psychology at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, suggests parents take the time to run through hypothetical situations with their kids. "If they're going to a party, run through what could happen. Say someone's driving them there. If the driver drinks at the party, what would they do? Give them a sense of what their options are, good and bad."

It's important to let teens know that their safety comes before worrying about whether there will be a punishment, according to Pastyrnak. So, don't condone drinking, but do offer to provide a lecture-free ride home if your teenager needs it. (Save the discussion and any consequences for later.) "If you keep open communication and keep judgment to a minimum, kids are more likely to seek you out," he says.

Rather than giving teens a hand-book, Van Brunt says that his overarching advice to his own teenage children and those he counsels is, "Pay attention to your environment. Know what's around and how it affects the decisions that you make."

For older teens, he frames the alcohol discussion as, "drinking to get drunk is not a really good plan," pointing out that the bad things—sexual assault, hangovers, vandalism—often happen when you're past the legal limit for driving. "I try to emphasize that if they're going to make the choice to drink, that they do it in a way that's maximizing the fun of that experience, rather than drinking as much as possible as quickly as possible."

Pastyrnak adds that parents should always ask their teens enough questions to be able to assess the potential dangers in a situation. And if the risks outweigh the benefits, parents should limit the outing. "Despite all that, teenagers are not going to tell us everything; and they're not going to ask for permission when they know that the answer is no," he says. "Knowing that your kids will likely find themselves in an unsafe position, it's important to have conversations about risky situations as well." ■



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Protecting Your Eyes

Vision problems, injuries, a family history of glaucoma or other serious eye disease—just a few reasons for *Your Teen* to talk adolescent eye care with Faruk H. Öрге, MD, FAAO, FAAP, Division Chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital.



Dr. Faruk Öрге is the
*Division Chief of Pediatric
Ophthalmology at University
Hospitals Rainbow Babies &
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How do we know an adolescent needs glasses after the school screenings stop?

Listen to them. Adolescents are old enough to tell you what's going on. We do the elementary school screenings because the children can't verbalize their problems, but if your adolescent is complaining about his vision, bring him to the ophthalmologist.

Should teenagers get an annual eye exam?

Not necessarily. But, if your teenager has prescription eyeglasses, is complaining about a vision issue, or if there is a significant family history of eye problems, then yes. Though it's rare, serious conditions, like glaucoma, can start in adolescence. In fact, glaucoma doesn't show up on a normal eye screening, so if it's in your family history, schedule your teenager to have his pressure checked on a regular basis. I recently saw a 15-year-old with end-stage glaucoma. He is

about to go blind. It's an insidious disease, but we can stop the progression of it if we find it early enough.

How about contact lenses? Some adolescents prefer not to wear glasses.

There is no magical age for contacts. But, wearing contacts does require a certain level of maturity, since you are putting an object into your eye. Your child has to be diligent about hand hygiene to prevent infection and be responsible about telling you if there is a problem.

What about the contacts with designs on them?

I highly recommend against this fad. Teenagers get these lenses—which have designs or colors—from friends or online. You see these contacts a lot at Halloween. However, eye care professionals don't offer any kind of oversight over these lenses, which can be dangerous. And the

hygiene risks of sharing lenses can result in lost vision through scarring.

What else do you see teenagers for?

Eye trauma, which tends to be more common in teenagers. Anything can hit the eye: fingers, elbows, sports equipment. We've seen it all. Trauma can be to the orbit—the eye socket—or the eye itself. These are common injuries and, unfortunately, because of the high velocity and the high impact, they can significantly damage the eye or eye socket.

What should you do if your adolescent has an eye injury?

If it's an obvious injury, there's no question—seek care immediately. Also seek care if there's light sensitivity, blurred vision, red eyes, double vision—especially when your teenager is looking in certain places—or there is pain in the eye. There's such a variety of injuries: to the eye socket, one or more of the six muscles that move the eye, or the eyeball. Don't assume



anything, and definitely seek care if your teenager is saying something isn't right. It's even difficult for non-ophthalmologic physicians to diagnose, which is why ER doctors typically ask an ophthalmologist to check the eyes as well.

Should we worry about how much our teenagers are on their screens?

This was a bigger issue in the old days when the screens emitted radiation. Staring at a screen today, even close up, doesn't damage the eyes, but it does cause dry eyes for everyone, not just teens. When you stare at a screen, you tend not to blink as much, and dry eyes cause blurred vision, triple or double vision, tearing, and red eyes.

Are there guidelines for screen time?

Our society is moving toward

more and more screen time. How much is appropriate for adolescents, from a social perspective, is a different discussion. But eye-wise, it's very individual. My eyes may dry out more quickly than yours. You may be able to go for 10 hours straight with no problems, whereas I may get dry eyes after just a couple hours.

So, how do we treat dry eyes?

You can use artificial tears, which are available over the counter. The brand doesn't matter, but make sure to buy a compound for dry eyes. I do not recommend the medications that are for red eyes; they just constrict the blood vessels so the eyes appear less red. They don't treat the underlying problem of the dry eyes, so the symptoms will bounce back and worsen when the medication wears off.

Some teenagers wear makeup. What are the potential problems with that?

Sharing makeup and using poor quality makeup are issues because the eyes and the skin around the eyes are sensitive. Low-quality products can cause contact reactions on that skin and sharing makeup transmits contamination, including viruses and bacteria and fungi, from person to person. I advise not wearing makeup at all, but if your teenager wants to wear it, they must practice diligent hygiene.

Advice on sunglasses?

Wear UV blocking sunglasses because chronic sun exposure can cause problems in the eyes and around the eyes. Even cheap sunglasses, which have UV A/B blocking, work as well as an expensive pair.

What else should parents know about eyes?

Protecting the eyes is important, especially when your teenager engages in activities where an object can fly into them: cutting the grass, hammering nails, playing sports, etc. Objects that hit the eye at high impact can cause many problems. So, whenever applicable, everyone should wear protective eye gear. Just the inexpensive goggles are fine. In general, parents should emphasize damage prevention. Also, if your teenager is having problems with their eyes—difficulty seeing up close or far away or double vision—encourage them to see a health care provider.

—Interview by D.S.

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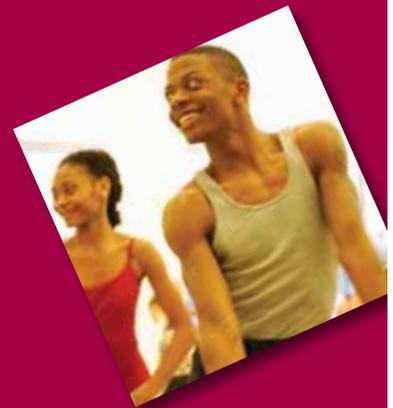


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Was That Really an Emergency?

Be careful when handing over an “emergency-only” credit card.

By Jane Parent



When Monica went to college, her parents gave her a credit card and a warning: “This is for emergencies only!” One evening, Monica invited friends over for a bonfire and needed supplies for s’mores. She didn’t have cash, so she used the credit card. A lack of chocolate is an emergency, right?

Most parents envision an entirely different scenario for an emergency, like running out of gas or getting stranded coming home from college because of a blizzard. Shopping for s’mores or grabbing lunch at Chipotle because your student didn’t have time to make it back to the dining hall before class? Probably not.

It begs the question: Is it a good idea for you to provide your teenager with an emergen-

cy credit card? If so, what guidelines should you establish?

It depends on your approach to money and debt. A credit card can be “part of a discussion that parents have with their teen early on, while they live in your house and under controlled circumstances,” says John Ulzheimer, credit expert at creditsesame.com.

Ulzheimer recommends that parents begin a discussion of financial responsibility at 14 or 15 and explain the circumstances that constitute an emergency. Tie the credit card to a major life event, like getting a driver’s license, to underscore the use of a credit card as a significant responsibility.

“Go over with them any charges they make without being too strict or too generous,” Ulzheimer advises. “The goal

is to teach them a proper understanding of credit so they have a few years with you to learn before they leave home and can get into big trouble.”

One bad charge is a teachable moment, but if your teen slips up again and again, then you have a range of options, including taking the card away and making them work to pay you back.

Meanwhile, some experts say, a credit card is not the best way to teach your teenager to handle an emergency. The “emergency-only” credit card teaches them to rely on credit, which can set them up for big problems later, argues Rachel Cruze, author of *Smart Money Smart Kids*. “Life has a way of becoming an emergency,” Cruze notes, “and parents should teach teens to budget and save money in the bank

for unforeseen expenses.”

She recommends that teens have at least \$500 in a savings account, more for college students, and use their own money “so they will be more reluctant to spend.” Cruze cites a 1987 MIT/Carnegie Mellon MRI brain study which found that the brain registers paying with cash as pain, while paying with credit anesthetizes the pain of paying—and results in greater spending.

Instead of a credit card, Cruze recommends that teens have a debit card linked to their own checking account, or a money market fund which is not readily accessible so they won’t be tempted to dip into it. “You are their parent, and you want to protect them from making those big, expensive mistakes. Giving them a credit card doesn’t do that.” ■

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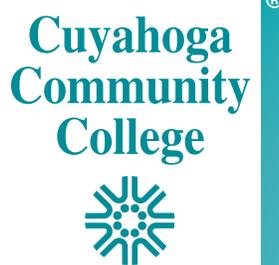
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Go to Bed Already!

Managing a tween's changing sleep pattern

By Dr. Deborah Gilboa

"I'm not tired. Can I hang out with you?" asks your sweet 7th grader...at 10:00pm on a school night.

His sweet sentiment is tempered by the late hour. We know the parent-math: late bedtime on a school night equals hard wake-up, cranky breakfast, dragging feet, missed school bus, rougher school day, tougher after school. And, all of this invariably happens the night before an evening event that will preclude an early bedtime the next day.

So, go to bed already!

As the mom of four kids born in six years, I prize that after-bedtime time as my unsupervised, me-time to do whatever I'd like. So, imagine my shock and dismay when the 12-year-old is still tossing and turning, and occasionally interrupting, that precious hour.

As a family doctor, though, I know the facts. Cortisol, the brain's "awake" hormone, changes our internal clock as puberty approaches. Our kids, who used to wake up at the crack of dawn but were sound asleep by 7:30pm, morph into people who aren't tired before 11:00pm and cannot drag themselves out of bed before 10:00am. This isn't contrari-

ness, laziness, or selfishness—it's biochemistry. In fact, a middle school that acknowledges this biochemistry would start at 11:00am and end at 7:00pm.

Although late nights lead to unwelcome challenges, middle school is a pretty safe time for our kids to learn the skills they need to manage the consequences. Here are some helpful tips that worked for our family:

- **Hard wake-up.** We've put the responsibility for waking up firmly into the hands of our middle schooler. He has an alarm clock and has learned to put it across the room so that he has to actually get up to turn it off. We don't dictate when he has to wake up, only that he must be on the school bus when it shows up. If he isn't on the school bus, he can walk to school (two miles) and take the detention for tardiness. That's only happened once. Of course, the fact that it was raining that day may have helped our cause.

- **Cranky breakfast.** Our son isn't hungry in the morning. But, if he doesn't eat food before 10:00am, he's very difficult to be around (and probably not learning anything). Compromise: He takes protein shakes and healthy microwaveable breakfasts that he eats during homeroom.

- **Dragging feet.** We've all learned to give our tween some space in the morning; his dragging feet don't have to slow anyone else down. He doesn't have to be cheerful, but he can't be mean. Since I, myself, may be the opposite of Miss Mary Sunshine in the mornings, my kids have already had some practice with this.

- **Rough school day.** Middle schoolers are usually aware of the academic and social pushback they get when they behave badly at school. Though my heart aches for a child having a bad day, I also recognize that there is a lot he can learn from that experience.

- **Tough after school.** I might dread this, but I don't have to fix it. Our son is learning about his mood and his sleep, seeing the advantage of taking some downtime after school, or going to bed a little earlier when he notices the impact of less sleep on his mood.

At the end of the day, we need to realize that the sleep battle is not entirely our teens' fault. They're wired for late to bed and late to rise. Our job is to work with them to figure out the best solutions. ■

Parenting expert, Deborah Gilboa, M.D., aka "Dr. G," is a family physician, international speaker, author, and TV personality.

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INTERVIEW WITH

Lawrence Trilling

Both at work and home, Lawrence Trilling is figuring out the joys and challenges of raising teenagers. At home, he's watching his three children, ages 16, 14, and 11, and at work, he's doing the same with the children of the Braverman family. As the producer and director of NBC's *Parenthood*, Trilling brings his personal experiences to the show and walks away with valuable lessons that he can implement at home. We spoke to Trilling about the interplay between his job and personal life, why he thinks his show struck a chord with audiences, and what we can learn from the lovable Braverman family.

How do the writers portray family relationships so well and so realistically on the show?

Most of the writers, directors, and producers are parents and we often draw on our own experiences with our children or stories from our friends and try to infuse these real-life experiences into the characters.

Do your kids mind being material for the show?

There have probably been a few moments where my kids have felt, 'Hey, why did you talk about what happened to me,' but it's usually fictionalized enough that our kids aren't aware that they're the source. Early on, we had a story about Sydney's bird dying, which led to existential questions about death, afterlife, and god. Those all came from my family, but I don't think my kids recognized the story.

Can you give another example?

Yes, when I'm directing the actors, working with the younger actors or doing parenting scenes, I'll infuse my own experiences into the parents' struggles communicating with a teen. This year, the character played by Ray Romano is having difficulty dealing with his teenage daughter and this has played a big part of the story line. Like all teenagers, the daughter can say the most scathing thing in one mo-

ment—boring into her father's worst qualities—and then turn into the sweetest, neediest kid. Teens flip without any provocation from one pole to the other. I've directly experienced that at the hands of my own teenagers, so I've been able to help navigate that on the set as well.

It is extremely impressive how well the character of Max portrays Asperger's. Did that also stem from real-life experiences?

Max comes directly from Jason Katims, the creator of the show, who has a son with Asperger's. He has infused the joys and challenges of his experience into the show. In addition, we consult with an autism expert who reads every script and works closely with Max Burkholder, the actor who plays Max Braverman, to give him insights into that world.

The whole development of Ray Romano's character, an adult who befriends Max and wonders whether he too has Asperger's, is also really interesting. Where did that come from?

People have watched the show and said, 'Oh my, I think that's me.' Max raised a lot of awareness on the issue, and while we didn't set out to do that, his story really struck a chord with families as they started the process of diag-

nosing their own children or themselves.

How do your kids feel about you working in Hollywood?

I work hard to keep my kids' lives separate from Hollywood. The only taste of Hollywood that they get is when they visit me at work—which used to be really exciting. But they've been on the set enough that it now feels normal. A lot of people bring their family around, so the set is an inviting, fun, and warm environment that doesn't feel glamorous or snooty.

Can you share any of your parenting struggles?

My son is a smart kid who is just starting to find his way academically. At the beginning of high school, we were getting notices from teachers all the time, so we quickly intervened with tutors and lots of parental supervision. But, our over-involvement had the reverse affect, and this year, we pulled back. We support him, but we aren't on top of him, and he's really turning things around. Now, we're getting wonderful feedback from teachers.

I think we can all relate to the pressures of college. How do you deal with that in your new laid-back approach to your son's education?

In my professional experi-

ence, a fancy school doesn't correlate to professional success. I work with people all the time who went to pretty humble or obscure colleges and are doing fantastic. So, we're really trying hard not to get too wrapped up in the college craziness and trust that there will be a great place for each of our kids.

Do you take home advice from the show?

When the writers develop stories, there's a lot of intimate sharing about family dynamics, whether marriage or childrearing, and from these insights, I realize that I'm not alone in my struggles and I learn about how someone did something the right way and can carry it forward into my family.

What has been your biggest take-away from the show?

I've learned that parenting teens is more like being along for the ride. Through our stories, I've realized that kids go through some eruptions in their life and then return to equilibrium. Kids will get out of control, but I now know that we can come through to the other side and get back to the equilibrium with new insight. I've been able to incorporate that in my own life. ■

—Interview by S.B.

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The Messy Room

You've heard it before: "It's my room, why do I have to clean it?" And to tell you the truth, your teenager may be right.

By Samantha Zabell

Chances are, you're very thankful that your teen's bedroom comes with a door—if it didn't, its contents would likely spill out into the hallway, multiply, and spread like a virus.

"My room is always a tornado," says Julia Friedberg, whose mess now accumulates in two places—her dorm room in Evanston, Illinois and in her home in New Jersey. "I've definitely tripped on stuff in the middle of the night, and my mom is constantly nagging me to clean it up."

Julia is a good student and a responsible daughter, but that doesn't stop her parents from "constantly nagging" about the growing piles of clean laundry on her bed, a closet of empty hangers, and clothes covering the floor.

"It's really hard to make teenagers do something," explains Dr. Lisa Damour, psychologist and director of Laurel School's Center for Research on Girls. "Teenagers have a lot of freedom, they're not little kids, and you can't take stuff away like you used to be able to."

Damour suggests using your leverage in another way, like a moratorium on shopping until they show that they can take care of what they have. Doing nothing is also

an option. Even the messiest room isn't likely to impact your teen's well-being, or yours, for the long-term, so let the natural consequences of lost homework and wrinkled clothes play out.

"On multiple occasions, my room has been so messy that I lose items moments after putting them down," says Rebecca Abers, from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "I end up running late from searching for things."

Does that picture sound familiar? If it does, step back. Your teen will likely, albeit slowly, begin to see the benefits of maintaining a clean room.

If the mess morphs into something that affects the family—like food that attracts creepy crawlies—feel free to enter without knocking and begin imposing consequences.

"They don't want us in their business, but occasionally, they send us engraved invitations to be in their busi-

ness," Damour says. "Rotting food in the room is an engraved invitation."

For Jamie Forman, of Pepper Pike, Ohio, it wasn't mess or nagging that motivated her to de-clutter her space—or, as she refers to it, her "organized mess." For her, there was something more important at stake.

"We got our dogs when I was 15," Jamie explains. "I had to keep a clean path so they could get to my bed." ■



Photo: Beth Segal

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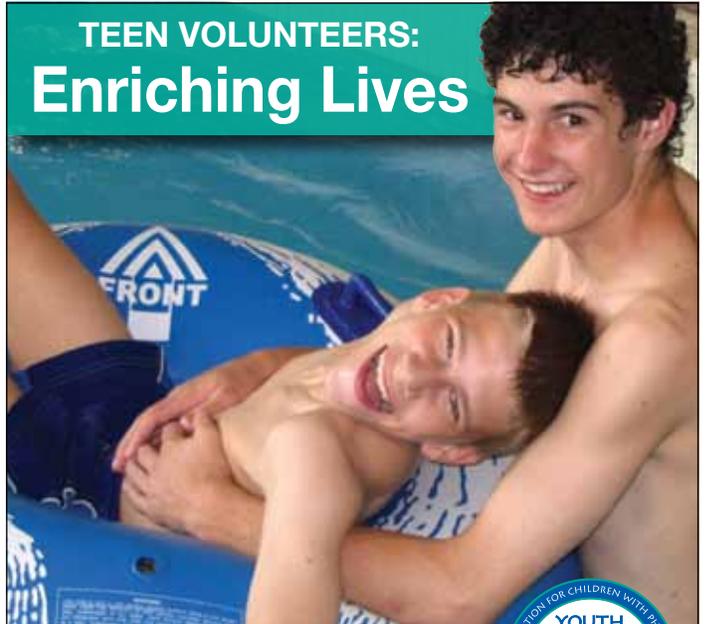
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Blake Ferrell: The Teenage Years

By Dave Ferrell



Our first child, Blake, was born in 1997. He seemed healthy, but ten months later he began having seizures. He underwent an intensive battery of metabolic and genetic testing. Doctors could not diagnose him.

At two, Blake couldn't sit up, walk, or speak. He was given a host of speech, occupational, and physical therapies. Thanks to an anti-convulsive medication, his seizures subsided. He learned to sit unsupported but still couldn't walk. Eventually, Blake began to speak and took his first miraculous steps.

Blake's seizures returned with a vengeance when he was nine. For the next three years, we sought different opinions and tried many drugs and diets. Despite all our efforts, his seizures were uncontrollable; he was having 150 to 200 seizures per month. Sadly, Blake lost what little speech he had worked so hard to attain.

My wife and I made a decision: we would keep going to hospitals, but we would accept and love our son how

he was and give him the best life possible.

Blake is now 16 years old and attends a special school that takes the students out into the community; the kids go to local restaurants and stores to learn skills and allow people to see them. They have jobs at local businesses, where they work hard and customers love them.

Riding the school bus is an event: the kids, with their driver, nurse, and aide, sing, listen to music, and eat snacks ... a great way to start and end the school day.

Blake attends prom each spring: dinner and dancing, no parents allowed, just like any other prom. His sports league holds a Halloween and Valentine's dance every year, too. The girls adore him!

He's a man of many passions: listening to his brother play the trumpet; riding with lifeguards on ATVs at the beach; riding roller coasters at Disney World; and watching movies on his iPad. Blake plays six sports in the Challenged Youth Sports League. He

swims and surfs with a foundation for special kids.

Basketball is his favorite spectator sport. Recently, Blake met the New Jersey Nets, and all the players signed his jersey.

Together, Blake and I compete in triathlons; I tow him in an inflatable boat during the swim leg of the event, pull him in a carrier behind my bicycle, and push him in a specially-outfitted wheelchair during the run.

Besides my wife and Blake's brother Luke, our triathlon team includes six adults who monitor Blake for his still-frequent seizures. We have completed dozens of triathlons, halfmarathons, 10Ks, and 5Ks.

The response from the community is amazing: everyone is excited to see Blake race. But it was the other athletes who surprised me most. Many people take the triathlon circuit very seriously, and I've always tried not to interfere with them. Turns out, these are some of the greatest folks. We get athletes flying past us giving Blake a big "Hi!" and "Way to go!" It makes me real-

ize that there is a place for everyone at any table.

As a financial advisor, I am proud that my company, Morgan Stanley, has a philanthropic mission. Morgan Stanley has sponsored many races.

As far as an actual diagnosis goes, our son's condition finally has been diagnosed as an incredibly rare disorder: a mutation of the STXBP1 gene. Blake is one of approximately 40 reported cases worldwide. The disorder is so rare and so new to the medical world that it does not yet have a name.

I have a wonderful family, great friends, and a firm that supports me. What more could I ask for? ■

Dave Ferrell is a Financial Advisor with the Global Wealth Management Division of Morgan Stanley Wealth Management in Red Bank, NJ. He can be reached at 732-224-3781 or David.C.Ferrell@morganstanley.com.

Must it always be about them? All About Me is a chance to talk about something other than your teen—finally.

Serving Up the Conversation

By Stephanie Schaeffer Silverman



“Something for the family,” was how it was pitched. My mind started racing—a night in a hotel room by myself so I could come back calm, cool, and collected? Apparently, that wasn’t quite what they had in mind.

The ping pong table was a gift from my in-laws about five years ago. We had said no to a game system. At the time, the thought of having to “monitor” one more thing in my household was going to push me right over. I was already monitoring computer time, TV time, practice time for instruments. So we explored some other options for the sake of my sanity.

“How about a foosball table?” my mother-in-law offered.

“I don’t think they’d use it.”

“A pool table?” I could picture them jabbing each other with the cue sticks.

“Nah.”

“What about a large screen TV for the basement?”

Clearly she doesn’t have the dreams I have of all of us sitting in front of a roar-

ing fire, nose in our books. (I have visions of Todd’s next wife—she likes electronics and can handle the screen time issue. Clearly a better woman than me. Whatever.)

“How about a ping pong table?”

Hmmm. That got my attention. Though I didn’t have one as a kid, I love the game, and actually dream of having one in my office. I agreed. They are going to love it. It’s not a roaring fire, but it will suffice.

And so a ping pong table arrived for the holidays, and with it came several other problems, but life lessons too.

1. You don’t start off as a great ping pong player. You start as a lousy player who slams your racket down, pronounces the game is “stupid,” and whips the ball at your mother, who sends you to your room. Three for three—all of my kids showed their lack of sportsmanship as they learned to master the game around the age of 11. Ping pong requires practice and patience.
2. I can’t let my kids beat me. I disguise this as I-just-want-them-to-learn-how-to-lose, but I really do like to

win. And, I want to see the look on their faces when they beat me fair and square. Ping pong shows you that no one hands you anything—you need to work for it.

3. Some of the best conversations in our house have occurred to the sound of the ball being rallied back and forth. Conversations that start with, “I know you won’t say anything to anyone.” He was right—I didn’t and never will. Ping pong removes direct eye contact, so everyone feels more comfortable sharing.
4. During a high stress time a few years ago, Todd and I found ourselves in the basement. The back and forth, back and forth provided some nice background noise as we talked and processed. Even grownups need some background noise.

I guess I just love what it represents—years of time well spent, many conversations, and good, clean family fun. In a weird way, I’m sad that I don’t have another kid that will whip a ping pong ball at my head. But there’s always the grandkids. ■



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