

Raising Adolescents

(What we learned from what we did well and mistakes we made.)

Biblical Principle that governs our parenting: We cannot take credit when our kids turn out well or blame ourselves when they rebel. Realize that we are partners with God in raising our kids. Our efforts alone are not enough. Our best parenting, done in faith is our part. I know some wonderful, Godly parents who have rebellious children. Ultimately, our kids make their own choices. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

1. Let them know that there is nothing they can do that is beyond forgiveness. Extend grace, not judgment. Love unconditionally, not based on their performance. Let them know that your relationship with them is more important than what they do or don't do. Make home a safe place where they can tell you about their failures and know they will get support and understanding not wrath. We all love our kids...that's a given...but do your words, tone and actions show that to them? Ask God for fresh insight into their lives. Realize they are changing and growing and view them fairly. Just because they have been irresponsible in the past, doesn't mean they are always going to be irresponsible. Don't label them. Allow them to put their past behind them. Ex: Madi's possible D in soc.

2. Celebrate and encourage their unique giftedness although it might not be what you planned. Your child is created for God's glory and we should involve ourselves in God's plan for their lives. The world values beauty, brains, power, success but the Lord values a pure heart. If you value education and they don't do well in school but excel in theatre, celebrate that! Ex: Sean – school is not as important as a heart for God.

3. Keep initiating time together, one-on-one and as a family, even when they resist. Do not have a 'breaking point' in which you give up or take it personally. Persevere!! Be willing to be rejected and let them know that even though they don't want to be with you, you always want to be with them. (Secretly, they want it or will appreciate it later and do eventually give in.) Don't make them come to you...meet them on their 'turf' i.e.: coffee together, movies. Ex: Snowboarding with Madi, Pete and Madi at the track. Do 'High/Low' exercise.

4. Stay involved in what they are involved in. Because they resist time with us, it is easy to give in to that and leave them alone. Put in the effort! Stay involved in their school, their teams, and their activities. This communicates that the activity is worthwhile and that you want to be a part of what is important to them.

5. Keep communicating even when they don't respond. Tell them that you love them that you are proud of them, that you want to hang out with them, hug them.

6. Be available. Special moments don't happen on a convenient schedule. You never know when those moments will occur. They are always unexpected. Be flexible with your schedule, be available to listen, talk, and hang out when they are ready. Ex: Aggie's Hawaii vacation.

7. Know their friends. Their peer group is their biggest influence. Make sure they are the right kind of influence. You are who you hang out with. Make your house the place where your kids and their friends want to hang out. Let your kids know you want them and their friends there. Be fun. Be generous. Ex: Making food for them after school.

8. Be real. Don't be afraid to let them see your weaknesses as a human being...tell them when you've messed up. Ask for forgiveness. Tell them when you are nervous for a talk you have to give or are going through a tough time. It makes you approachable and makes it easier for them to relate to you.

9. Continue to nurture your relationship with your husband. Best gift we can give them is a solid marriage. They can leave for college without feeling guilty that you won't be 'ok'. Our friendship is our saving grace now.

10. Pray!! Even when our children seem out of control, out of our reach; we have unlimited access to them through prayer. Intercede on their behalf for their salvation, their godly character and their desire to serve Him. Stormie O'Martian's book, "*The Power of A Praying Parent*" articulates all the concerns of childrearing well.

