

“Food for Thought” – Adolescence

Have your own happiness

A major trap for parents to avoid is pinning your happiness or sense of success to your children. If you measure your own worth by their achievements or happiness, take care. While it is healthy to feel pride in your children, regarding their success as the yardstick by which you judge yourself, or are judged, leaves you very vulnerable and results in you losing your sense of self.

It is natural to hope they'll do things and use chances you couldn't or didn't have, but it's not natural to totally sacrifice your life and happiness for theirs.

There's a huge difference between encouraging children to achieve their potential and pressuring them. Try to maintain realistic expectations and avoid labelling children as lazy, poorly motivated or 'hopeless' simply because their best isn't what you want it to be.

Don't rush in

Similarly, you end up doing no-one any favours by rushing in to protect children from the consequences of their own actions and their uncomfortable or unpleasant outcomes. Often it's an irrational response, where parents tell themselves that if they don't help they're not good parents, but allowing natural consequences in most cases, (provided health and safety are not issues) is one of the best ways that our teenagers can learn the lessons of life.

Challenging the Status Quo

It may sound contradictory, but one of the most constructive things your teenagers can do for you is to question your ideas and values. To establish their own, adolescents need to challenge the old and explore the new.

Try not to jump on your high horse

It's easy to fall into a comfort zone or give out a self righteous attitude. Welcome the chance for review.

Yes, teenagers can be intensely irritating at times – they can give “those looks” – pert, sullen, stormy, pouty; they may become permanently attached to the phone; they may take up permanent residence in the bathroom; you think there is carpet on the bedroom floor but you haven't seen it for a while, and communication has become something of a challenge (to say the least!!). Yet at the same time, they can be interesting, challenging and a source of great love and pride as they develop into young men and women with their own views and beliefs. Enjoy them.

Taken from *Telopea Park School's* newsletter.