Overview Paper

Raising Today's Teens
Why Parents Matter
National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

Introduction

Say the phrase "teenager" and most parents think about an Internet generation of online chatting and gaming, text messaging and web surfing young people. We think of children cloistered in rooms hardly wanting to come out for dinner, or gangs of potentially violent young people, sexually promiscuous, hooking up, hanging out and abusing drugs. None of these stereotypes are accurate if we really look at today's teens.

Despite appearances to the contrary, today's adolescents are doing surprisingly well. What's more, if we ask them, they'll say they want their parents and other caregivers (coaches, teachers, mentors, grandparents, foster parents, etc.) to be a part of their lives. One parent or two, step-parents or a caring grandparent who takes over when needed -- it doesn't really matter who's helping to raise a teen these days. Teenagers need and want us adults to help them 'jump the maturity gap.' They want us to see them as adults-in-training, learning to take responsibility for themselves and others.

Small Embraces, Big Rewards

If we listen closely, today's teens will tell us:

- **"I ache for connections with my family."** That includes parents. They may not show it, but beneath the bravado of independence is a game of emotional tug-of-war that teenagers want their parents to fight and occasionally win.

- **"I want to be held accountable for my actions**." Teenagers want to be treated like adults. They want responsibilities they can handle. Holding them accountable lets them know someone cares about them enough to show them how to behave.

- **"I want to make a contribution."** Teenagers want a place in their communities and a role that makes them indispensable to others. They want to know they are important to someone other than just themselves.

- ◾ **"I feel connected to my peers in ways you may not understand."** All that time spent communicating electronically may not be bad for teenagers as long as there is parental oversight and occasional opportunities to connect in person.

- ◾ **"I like living in a world where people can be different."** Our teenagers are more aware than any generation before them of the vastness of human experience and diversity of cultural backgrounds. Most are willing to accept people who are different from them because of their race, abilities, sexual orientation or country of origin.

If we're really listening, teenagers tell us they like feeling a part of their families, schools and communities.[1] There's a lot of research that proves this is so. What that research also shows is that small efforts by parents and other caregivers to reach out to teens pay big dividends. They are desperate to be offered a part-time job, a chance to be helpful, or a place to show-off their talents. Even the most challenging of young people, the ones already troubling us with their delinquent behaviour, want to feel a small embrace now and again. They want to bask under the gaze of someone who says with their eyes, and occasionally their words, "You count."

Today's Teens

Each generation of teenagers faces innumerable challenges. Some of the problems teens face today are the same as a generation before, some are unique. For most families, there are five 'biggies' that they worry about most.

1) Sex

Reality is: Sexual thoughts are a normal part of a teenager's psychological and physical development during puberty. During early adolescence, as physical changes to teenager's bodies are taking place, girls and boys begin to experience strong attractions to others and interest in their bodies sexually. However, just because a teenager's body is physically ready for sexual activity like intercourse and pregnancy, it doesn't necessarily mean he or she is emotionally ready to handle these experiences or their consequences. Early, or precocious, sexual development and interest can lead to troubling relationships (often with older youth), risky sexual activity (like intercourse and oral sex without protection), sexually transmitted infectious, and unplanned pregnancy.

Good news: Rates of sexual activity among teenagers have not changed much in three generations. Consistently, over the years, researchers have found that 10% of teenagers become sexually active around the age of 14. The rate increases by about 10% a year until, at time of graduation from high school, approximately 50-60% of young adults have already experienced sexual intercourse.[2] The good news is that teens today from many higher risk groups, like urban youth and youth of some minority groups, may actually be having sex less often than their parents did when they were young.

2) Delinquency

Reality is: Many adolescents do things that could be considered delinquent. There is a wide range in the seriousness of delinquent behaviours. Only a small number of youth are committing a large number of the most serious crimes.[3] In some families and communities, children are growing up exposed to violence. Some of these teens will be enticed into gangs, most often those for whom conventional paths to success (like education and meaningful employment) don't hold much promise.

Good news: Across almost every jurisdiction crime rates among teenagers are dropping. If

we think otherwise it's because a few kids are getting a lot of bad press. Studies over time actually show that more than 95% of teenagers who are delinquent stop their troubling behaviours once they become adults. Recent statistics also show that property crimes, like theft, are declining.[4] These numbers are even more astounding when we realize that police are likely to charge young people for assaults and thefts that take place at school or at home where a generation ago such matters were not criminalized, but dealt with by parents and teachers themselves.

3) Substance Abuse

Reality is: There are some dangerous new substances for our children to abuse. Some, like 'crystal meth,' are highly addictive chemical compounds. Children from middle- and upper-class homes have higher rates of addiction than youth from poorer families (the wealthier youth can afford to purchase the drugs).[5] Alcohol continues to be the most common substance used by young people, and getting drunk is, for many youth, still viewed as a rite of passage that marks their transition to adulthood. Cannabis is the second most common substance used by youth and the first among illicit drugs.[6]

Good news: The majority of adolescents in Canada do not have alcohol or other drug use problems. For most, the use of alcohol or illicit drugs is experimental or occasional. Rates of substance abuse are going down. In some surveys of young people, rates of drug use and abuse are dropping,[7] though for families with a teenager trapped in a pattern of abuse, this news is not going to reassure them. Treatment programs are now more effective at engaging young people in treatment, using harm reduction models that help youth act responsibly rather than demanding abstinence.

4) Suicide

Reality is: Adolescence is a time of tremendous change for young people. They can literally lose a sense of themselves and their lives as they strive to move towards a brighter future. The pain of feeling lost, hopeless or ashamed can lead a young person to take his or her own life. A child, regardless of race/ethnicity, is more likely to commit suicide when he or she lacks a sense of his or her culture, connections to other people, opportunities to feel valued, or has suffered severe emotional abuse, often resulting from physical and sexual violence.[8] Although boys attempt suicide less often, they use guns and cars as the primary means of killing themselves, which are much more lethal than the poisoning and prescription drug overdoses typical of girls.

Good news: Suicide rates among young people rose for three decades before stabilizing during the past ten years.[9] For most teenagers, suicide is preventable if we provide them with a sense of their lives as purposeful and get them counselling after they've experienced severe trauma.

5) Internet Related Problems

Reality is: The Internet can be a dangerous place. An increasing number of children report having been solicited sexually via the Internet.[10] Pornography is easily available. Online gaming and gambling have become problem addictions for many young people. There is a fear that too much screen time contributes to high rates of inactivity and Type II Diabetes in young people. Excessive time spent online may isolate a child. Cyber-bullying (harassing and teasing a youth through online postings) has been linked to the suicides of many teenagers.[11]

Good news: There is an abundance of information available on cyber safety, a few are mentionned in the **Resources for Parents and Caregivers** section. There are also many schools that teach adolescents responsible use of the Internet. Three-quarters of all solicitations by sexual predators occur while children are on their home computers, meaning that parents can make themselves available to help.

Why Parenting Matters

Most problems are preventable. Especially when families encourage their children's schools and wider communities to practice prevention. Teen health centres in high schools and junior highs, changes to the criminal justice system that hold the worst offenders accountable (but keep lesser offenders away from the bad influence of more delinquent peers), safe internet use training, and addictions prevention programming are all helping to keep kids safe. Parents can help their teenagers by connecting them to these programs, but no program is going to be effective without a parent to help reinforce the learning.

Teen Development

There is a myth that adolescents go through a period of storm and stress; that relationships between teenagers and parents have to be full of conflict. The truth is that most children experience a rather easy time growing up. Most value their relationships with their parents and look to parents for guidance. For those who don't, some rebellion against the rules can actually be a healthy way of coping and asserting their independence.

Of course, every adolescent can expect at least a few emotional crises growing up. Much of the emotional angst a young person experiences can be attributed to the teenager's changing body, brain and beliefs.

Changing Bodies

When the pituitary gland at the base of the brain begins secreting growth hormones, a child's body begins to change. Sex steroids (testosterone released by the testes in boys and estrogen from girls' ovaries) are responsible for secondary sex characteristics like body hair growth and other obvious physical changes.

With so many changes occurring in their bodies, it's no wonder some teenagers are anxious and sensitive about their physical appearance. Having a negative view of themselves can lead to harmful behaviours such as eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, a desire to remain terribly thin by not eating, and bulimia nervosa, a disorder where the youth eats then forces her- or himself to throw up afterwards. Both are serious problems for youth and can lead to hospitalization and even death. While more common disorders for girls, boys too can exhibit both behaviours. Boys may also try to make themselves excessively muscular by taking steroids to shape their bodies to look strong. Both patterns of coping with changing bodies are not healthy and need intervention.

What parents can do: It's reassuring for teens to know that however their body is developing, fast or slow, there is no right way for maturation to occur. Parents can offer reassurance by telling their teenager to accept themselves for who they are, and reinforcing all the positive characteristics they should be proud of. Providing practical support doesn't hurt either, like helping them to choose clothing they feel good in. What teens don't find helpful, however, is too much reassurance or an over-reliance on material solutions to body image problems. Telling teens you accept them just the way they are is one thing, but making exaggerations about the child's beauty

or skills creates a false sense of self-esteem that is likely to be quickly toppled by peers.

Changing Brains

Developmentally, our teenagers are making rapid advances in their capacity to think through problems and think about thinking. Their prefrontal cortex, a layer of neurons just behind their foreheads, is developing rapidly. With it comes the capacity to think about future consequences, inhibit rash actions, and see the effect one's behaviour has on others. Growth in this part of the brain also makes it possible for teenagers to think about abstractions like time and religion. At about age 11, children grow in their capacity to think beyond the concrete, though the process can take years until a youth is fully able to demonstrate more adult-like thinking. The more a child uses his or her brain the better tool it becomes.

Adolescence can also be a time when the first signs of mental illness appear. More than just storminess in their relationships with others, teenagers can start to show the signs of mood disorders like depression, anxiety and early psychosis which jumble their thinking.

What parents can do: For most teens, it's important they be given manageable amounts of risk and responsibility. They need experiences that are just at the edge of their skill development. Keeping them too safe may inadvertently take away opportunities to develop new competencies. Street sense, commonsense and emotional regulation aren't taught to teenagers. They are coached. Teens themselves have to experiment with new experiences if healthy brain development is to follow. For those showing more serious impairment, depression, or addictions, it is worthwhile seeking the help of a mental health professional who can diagnose the problem and prevent things from getting worse.

Changing Beliefs

As children grow into teenagers their ability to reason through moral dilemmas keeps apace with changes to body and brain. While the young child thinks "What's good for me?" the pre-teen makes decisions by reasoning through what is proper and improper behaviour in her community. Throughout adolescence, teenagers develop a more personal set of beliefs based on principles that they choose as their own from those around them. They base their behaviour on these principles, and act accordingly. It's been argued that girls and boys approach their beliefs differently, with young women emphasizing relationships, while young men tending to think in terms of cause and effect. Either way, as teens grow older their ability to hold on to a set of principles increases. They can be quite categorical in their thinking, believing everyone should think just like them. Much of what they say they believe reflects the culture around them and what is valued by others. For young people who experience exposure to lots of different ways of thinking, their beliefs about aspects of their lives like God and Truth, and even the value of education, may differ from the values held by their parents.

What parents can do: Encourage a teenager to question his or her beliefs. And the beliefs of his or her family. As difficult as that may be, developing a critical gaze on what one believes prevents children from blindly following others. A youth who has taken the time to reflect on his beliefs is going to resist the attraction of dangerous lifestyles. He is going to know what's important to him. Our children's moral development takes place through relationships. Though it may not always appear so, young people are looking to the adults in their lives to model for them appropriate ways to behave. Their relationships with us spur their growth as thinking, caring individuals embedded in networks of healthy relationships.

Different Families, Different Teens

For several decades we have been studying which teenagers grow up well and which falter. Families usually know best what their teenagers need.

Cultural Differences

While family researcher Diana Baumrind discovered three distinct parenting styles, she had a bias towards just one. Baumrind showed that parents tend to be most effective when they use an *authoritative* parenting style.[12] Barbara Coloroso, borrowing from Baumrind's work, describes authoritative parents as ones with backbones.[13] Like a backbone, they can offer both structure and flexibility ("I'm willing to listen, but you have to convince me that what you want to do is safe or else I won't agree to it"). In contrast, an *authoritarian* style of parenting is typical of brickwall families who have inflexible rules ("You do it my way because I said so"). The *permissive* parent is like a jellyfish, providing teens with little structure ("Anything you want is fine with me, Dear").

Like many aspects of parenting, however, culture and where we live make doing the job much more complicated. In a dangerous community, for example an inner-city poor neighbourhood, the more authoritarian "(My way or the highway!)" parenting style is likely to raise better kids. These parents tell their kids what to do because it's too risky to negotiate with an adolescent when streets are dangerous.

For parents who are New Canadians, or whose culture differs from that of their wider community, cultural differences can create lots of parent-teen conflict. As teenagers acculturate to values that are different from

those of their parents, they experience a great deal of mental strife and threats to their self-concept.[14] There is no easy solution, but young people who find ways to both adhere to their culture of origin and fit in beyond their front doors are most likely to thrive. Helping teens achieve this balance can mean both showing flexibility in how teens are parented (letting them experiment a little with behaviours that are not part of their home culture) while still expecting them to participate in their traditions.

Gender Differences

Girls and boys are much the same when it comes to what they need. And yet families treat each very differently. Across cultures, expectations for boys and girls are not always the same. The rites of passage they celebrate (ways families mark each gender's transition to adulthood) are usually quite unique. Though boys and girls should be treated equally, we shouldn't overlook that their development proceeds at different rates which means they may pass through development milestones at different paces. For example, because girls are likely to develop physically somewhat earlier than boys, they may feel more ready for a more serious committed relationship before their male same-age peers.

Families also differ in how they look at their teenagers. Depending on family background, parents send boys and girls very different messages. Boys may be encouraged to be more independent, while young women may be told to do more of the emotional labour for their families, looking after parents and even brothers. While equality is promoted at school, at home different parenting styles with teenaged boys and girls can cause conflict. The good news is that girls who are assertive and resist stereotypes may actually have better mental health outcomes than their more passive peers, but their relationships with their more traditional families may suffer as a

consequence.[15] For parents with daughters, it can mean endless worry and the need to see the world through their daughter's eyes. All that rebellion may be a good thing, at least within limits.

Differently Abled

Teenagers with physical, mental or emotional disabilities present a number of challenges to parents. Advocates for children's rights argue it's more helpful to see these children as differently abled than disabled. A focus on their strengths and what they have to offer changes what we think a child with a limitation can do. Many individuals with "disabilities" actually develop a strength of character beyond that of others due to the challenges that they face.

Parenting differently abled children requires parents to help them get all their needs met just like any other child. No matter what a young person's difficulties, she will still want to feel independent, connected, experience self-esteem and have a say over decisions affecting her as much as possible. Parents can help by advocating for their child's rights and speaking up for special case plans. Schools and communities can support these kids by making themselves more inclusive (offering these children access to recreational activities, special events, and integration into mainstream activities like regular classrooms). It's important to remember that a disability likely limits only some aspects of the adolescent's development. Other needs, like a young woman's sense of herself as maturing sexually and wanting to appear attractive to others, is likely to be experienced in the same way it is for all adolescents.

Differences in Sexual Orientation

For youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered (LGBT), adolescence is a time of anxiety, isolation and fear. Many families find it difficult to accept that their child

is not heterosexual. Negative attitudes towards LGBT people can prevent youth from "coming out" to their families and community, as they hear expressions of prejudice as a rejection of who they are. This increases their sense of isolation and can cause a host of other problems, including depression. It's important to consider carefully how our opinions as parents and caregivers affect the teens in our care. It's always better to communicate a message of acceptance if we want our teens to grow up healthy.

The good news is that most families eventually accept their children's sexual identity, even welcoming their children's intimate partners into their extended family.[16] Gaining acceptance at home and in one's community requires allies and supports. Schools are doing their part to make themselves safer places for LGBT youth. Some even support Gay-Straight Alliances in which students of both orientations work together to fight against heterosexism (the bias towards heterosexuality over other sexual orientations). Avoiding the high suicide rates and bullying many LGBT youth experience is often best done by building a community of support that helps LGBT youth feel they belong.

What Teenagers Want from their Parents

Teenagers want to hear four important messages:

- ▌"You belong"
- ▌"You are trustworthy"
- ▌"You are responsible"
- ▌"You are capable"

Those are the same messages most adults want to hear. Teenagers are likely to behave in ways that help them hear those four messages. If parents and caregivers are going to help teens hear these same messages in ways that are more socially acceptable, and less dangerous, we are going to have to speak in ways young people can hear us. Here are a few strategies:

- ▌**The power of 'I' statements:** Replace "You should…" with "I feel…" Your 13-year-old is arguing with you that he wants to give up playing the piano. Forcing a teen to do something that he doesn't want to do can be tough. Instead of demanding he continue, try expressing your feelings: " I always thought you were such a great piano player, and I loved to hear you play. I feel sad watching you give it up. I worry that you might regret your decision later." Of course, when the behaviour threatens his well-being, like doing drugs, there may be a place for "You must stop." The trick is knowing the very few times to tell kids what to do. More often it's better to help them understand how they make you and others feel.

- ▌**Our values are our values, but not necessarily theirs:** Be careful not to force your values on your teenagers. Some values are non-negotiable, like going to school or household chores, but many families watch their relationships descend into chaos because parents are insisting their teenagers think like they think. When we force our kids to do things, we tell them we don't trust them to make their own decisions. When it comes to a clash of opinions, ask your teen, "What is it about that way of thinking that you like?" and be prepared to hear the answer.

- ▌**Model mature problem-solving:** It's always better to *show rather than tell*. However we want our kids to act should be how we act. Don't want them smoking? Don't smoke. Don't want them mouthing off at you? Don't use foul language in front of them.

Why Parents matter

There is much that parents and other caregivers can offer teenagers that will help them develop along paths that are good for them.

1) Maintain healthy boundaries and limits (teens will thank you for them!)

Teenagers, even delinquent teens, want someone to set some limits. How else will they know anyone cares? They also want adults in their lives who establish clear boundaries. A parent needn't be a teenager's friend. Adolescents don't need another friend. They need a trustworthy mentor who can show them what it means to be an adult. When boundaries get confused, teens become parents, parents become children. And while that may work in the cartoons, real kids need parents to occasionally do what is in the child's best interest, even if the young person doesn't appreciate the help at the time. It's important to remember, even if a teen endlessly challenges authority, and more often than not disobeys, he still wants someone to at least try to place reasonable limits on him. Teens want help avoiding dangers. Parents who set limits and maintain boundaries tend to raise healthier young people.

2) Make rules that don't drive young people to rebellion

When teenagers have restrictions placed on them it's important that the rules make sense, are in proportion to the real risks the teen faces, and don't infringe on areas in which the young person should be autonomous. For example, while parents can establish a time for the television to be turned off, a parent can't force a young person to go to sleep. And while a parent can establish reasonable curfews, a parent can't effectively decide who a young person chooses as a boyfriend or girlfriend. Trying to set rules that are too restrictive simply makes teenagers go underground with their behaviour. Others may become anxious and depressed, having given up a valuable sense of themselves as capable and trusted to make good decisions on their own. Think of rules as teaching tools. When rules are set they

should help to keep teenagers reasonably safe, while offering them access to all the experiences they will need to lay the foundation for adulthood. If they don't learn at home what they need to know then they'll have to learn these life lessons later when there is nobody around to help guide them.

3) Teach alternatives to anger

Most young people do not become violent and surly during their teen years. Adolescence is a time to learn alternative ways of curtailing natural impulses to fight when threatened. Parents and caregivers can help teens learn new ways of dealing with heightened emotions and bigger bodies that can become explosive when hormonal changes and maturing brains cause awareness of injustices without coping strategies to compensate. Our teens want their parents to model calm, reasonable accommodations and negotiation skills. They also want to know that acting out in anger won't be tolerated and has consequences. Remember, parents and caregivers are preparing their teenagers for a time when their actions will have permanent consequences, like a criminal record or lost job. Better they learn at home how to channel anger and upset into constructive problem-solving.

4) Say 'Yes' more than 'No'

Adults can show teens how to behave by offering them substitutes for their unreasonable, even dangerous, choices. In general, except in the most extreme of cases, teens prefer to hear "Yes" rather than "No." The teen who wants to attend a party where there is a real risk of drugs and alcohol being present can be told, "No, you can't go." But then what? That teen is begging to find a place she belongs, and wants to feel trusted. Perhaps the same parents can offer the teen another equally exciting opportunity to prove her maturity. A trip to another city to visit a relative alone? A chance to attend a rock concert?

Maybe hosting her own house party, with her parents at home in the kitchen, and a few friends providing the music? When we adults think about what teens really want, we can usually find ways to say 'Yes' to behaviours they'll value.

5) Provide a mirror to a teenager's strengths

Remember, teenagers are looking to the adults in their lives to tell them how special they are. As a parent or caregiver, you are like a fun house mirror. The teenager looks at you and wants to see himself reflected back in ways that convinces the youth and others of the young person's powerful identity. Find real, substantial things to comment on. Then convince your teenager you value him for what he is doing right.

6) Advocate for what a teen needs

We all need someone in our corner when life threatens us with challenges that are too big for one person alone. Parents and caregivers have the special ability to advocate for teens to help them get what they need. When schools fail to tailor programs to a teenager's needs, or an employer is endangering a teenager's safety, it's usually a good time for an adult to go and help the teen negotiate for something to change. As adults, our voices are louder. Our teenagers are looking to us to support them in their battles with bureaucracies and bullies.

Trust Yourself

The best thing any parent or caregiver can do is to trust his or her instincts. No matter what this overview paper says, it's always best to show your teenager you are doing what you think best. Trust what you learned from once being a teenager. Remember whatever you do, no matter what your culture, or where you live, your teen will appreciate being shown you care about his or her welfare.

When parents and caregivers balance protection with opportunities to grow the results are always good for teens!

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

While most of this paper is focused on you raising your teenager yourself, there are times when problems get out of hand and help is needed. Adolescence can bring about many challenges that professional counsellors, such as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, guidance counsellors, clergy and nurses (to name just a few of the most common helping professionals teenagers and families go to see) can help with. If you are looking for support, you may want to investigate some of the following websites for information. Your own community health centre, your child's school, place of worship, family doctor, the Internet, or *Yellow Pages* can provide a listing of counsellors and family therapists. Service is almost always confidential. Many health care plans provide for at least a few sessions free of charge. Some public agencies have "sliding scales" (the fee is adjusted to what you can afford to pay).

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (http://www.aamft.org/) With its network in the United States, Canada and internationally of over 30,000 therapists, AAMFT is a professional association that regulates standards for therapists. It's a good place to find a local family therapist through their Therapist Locator link (http://www.therapistlocator.net/).

Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (http://www.camh.net/) CAMH provides care to teens and adults with addictions in Ontario. The website has resources related to understanding addictions and other mental health problems.

Canadian Mental Health Association (http://www.cmha.ca/bins/index.asp)

A nation-wide voluntary organization promoting everyone's mental health. The CMHA is also a strong advocate and provider of programming for mental health consumers, their families and friends.

Children's Mental Health Ontario (http://www. kidsmentalhealth.ca)
A site with lots of links to both reports on adolescent health and resources for parents. Go to the Links section and browse.

Cybertip.ca (http://www.cybertip.ca/app/en)
Canada's national tip line for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. It also provides the public with information, referrals and other resources to help Canadians keep their children safe while on the Internet.

Internet101 (http://www.internet101.ca/en/ index.php)
An RCMP-led committee of police forces created this website to help kids and parents surf the internet safely.

Parent Help Line (http://www.parent helpline.ca)
Although the Parent Help Line 1-888 phone service was permanently closed in February 2006, you can continue to visit this website for links to other services.

Public Health Agency of Canada (http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/family_famille/index_e.html)
One of many government websites where a wealth of information is available on parenting teens. Search the numerous links and read on.

Today's Parent (http://www.todaysparent.com/)
The popular magazine also has a website full of resources. Though they most often publish on topics related to younger children, they are still a good resource for information on raising teens.

Youngandhealthy.ca (http://www. youngandhealthy.ca/caah/)
An initiative of the Canadian Association for Adolescent Health, the site is available in French and English. Though tailored mostly to teens

themselves, adults may find the information just as useful.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Here are just a few of the resources parents and caregivers can look at to learn more about raising teenagers today:

- ▌ David Wolfe's concise book *What Parents Need to Know about Teens* (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2007) is a 60-page summary of how parents can help teens grow up well.

- ▌ Barbara Coloroso's *Just Because it's not Wrong doesn't make it Right* (Viking, 2005) builds on Coloroso's respectful message for parents that they can raise children who act responsibly.

- ▌ Michael Ungar's *Too Safe for Their Own Good* (McClelland & Stewart, 2007) and *Playing at Being Bad* (McClelland & Stewart, 2007) both explore the ways parents can offer children substitutes for their problem behaviours, building on a teenager's strengths. [*Too Safe for Their Own Good* has been published in French with the title *Le Syndrome de la Mère Poule* (Les Editions de L'Homme, 2007)]

- ▌ Scott Wooding's *Rage, Rebellion & Rudeness* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2003) is a good overview of how to handle problem behaviours among teens.

- ▌ Michael Chettleburgh has written a disturbing volume of the dangerous world of Canadian street gangs, many of them populated by youth. *Young Thugs* (HarperCollins, 2007) emphasizes that most kids aren't likely to become gang involved, but for those few that do, it is a dangerous life.

- Nick Barham's *Disconnected* (Random House, 2004) is all about this next generation of youth, what they think and why they act the way they do.

- Anastasia Goodstein's *Totally Wired* (St. Martin's, 2007) does a wonderful job of informing parents how their children are connecting through cyberspace. It will help parents help their teens be responsible and safe users of electronic spaces.

- Richard Lerner's *The Good Teen* (Crown, 2007) makes an informed case that teens aren't all bad and that many don't experience the storm and stress we associate with adolescence.

- The theme of attachment prominent in this monograph is also explored in Sue Gerhardt's *Why Love Matters* (Routledge, 2004).

- The message that parents are important to their children, despite what we think in this electronic age, is also found in Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté's *Hold on to Your Kids* (Random House, 2004).

- Madeline Levine's *The Price of Privilege* (HarperCollins, 2006) looks at the special problems facing teens from privileged homes.

- Rachel Simmons *Odd Girl Out* (Harcourt, 2002) explores problems of aggression among girls, and the ways we need to address it.

- Laura Session Stepp has written a provocative work titled: *Unhooked: How young women pursue sex, delay love, and lose at both* (Penguin, 2007). She argues that young women are disadvantaging themselves by buying into men's ways of making relationships casual.

- William Pollack's *Real Boys: Rescuing our sons for the myths of boyhood* (Henry Holt, 1998) is a good guide to how to help boys grow up beyond the stereotypes.

- Michel Delagrave's *Ado : mode d'emploi* (Éditions Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 2005) proposes to parents ways to reclaim their authority.

- Céline Boisvert's *Parents d'ado : de la tolérance nécessaire à la nécessité d'intervenir* examines the three major transformations that teens go through (body, interpersonal relationships and thought process) that help define their new identity.

Selected Bibliography of Sources

The material in this paper reflects a wide and diverse number of works by researchers and family therapists concerned with raising healthy teens. Some of the professional writing used to produce this paper includes:

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