

# UNDERSTANDING TEENAGERS SOMETIMES WILD, ALWAYS WISE

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- Fear governs so much of our lives and leads to us creatively and unconsciously devising all kinds of protective strategies to eliminate or at least reduce the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, behavioural, creative and sexual threats we encounter

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- When we no longer secretly try to win love through relationships, work, status, wealth, success we become much better artists, businesspeople, politicians, parents, students, or teachers. We are freed to do what we do as a form of creative play rather than as a form of self-validation.

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- The same principle holds true in every sphere, from political leadership to spiritual practice. Given the great challenges facing our planet, there is a tremendous need for conscious leaders who can, out of their love for self and humanity, put the long-term benefit of the planet above the protective short-term interest of their approval ratings.

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- “Possibly the greatest psychic effect on children is the life parents have not lived”

*Carl Jung*

“Your drive, your psychological likes and dislikes, your motives to achieve goals, and the values by which you achieve those goals are all part of the emotional etchings buried in your inner core. They shape the way you make decisions, exercise judgement, and take action. They affect the people who come into contact with you: subordinates, peers, family. They affect how you see these people.



Your inner core determines how clearly you see and perceive, what you select as important, how you think and act, and the quality of your judgements, decisions, and relationships.

It affects the way you frame an issue, how you search for information, and from whom.

And it very often does these things without Tweeting them to your conscious mind





Becoming aware of dealing with your inner core is at the centre of parental and leadership effectiveness and development. The more acutely you are aware of it, the better you will be as a parent/leader."

*Talent Masters*



“What remains unconscious in the parent, however well intended the parent is, is what will be transmitted to the child and the child’ unconscious response may remain a continuing obstacle to a fuller life.”

*James Hollis, 2006*

# BEST KEPT SECRETS

- Unconditional love is the deepest longing
- We are creators – not victims!
- Belief in Self and Teenager is essential
- Genius is always present!
- In a world of individuals it makes no sense to compare
- Self-Reliance is always present
- What you feel, think, say and do is always 100% about you
- What another feels, thinks, says and does is always 100% about him/her

# BEST KEPT SECRETS

- Separateness is the basis for all relationships
- Suffering is a path – not a pathology
- There is no evil – only love tortured by its own hunger and thirst
- Fear is a creation
- Cure for loneliness is solitude!
- No consciousness without pain!
- What lies hidden is what wants to emerge
- There is a deeper knowing that makes decisions for us that we do not know we're making!

# The Challenge of Independence

- Having a sense of one's own unique self
- Becoming self-realised and self-responsible
- Becoming emotionally and socially independent
- Developing one's own beliefs and values
- Determining one's educational and career paths
- Establishing financial independence
- Creation of conscious relationships with same and opposite gender peers
- Management of full intimacy with another

# Steps on the Way to Independence

- Early gender polarisation – the wisdom of this
- Transition time and moodiness
- Gender attractions
- Adults know nothing!
- Seeing the ‘vice’ in advice!
- Need for parents to stay separate

## Key Issues for Parents

- Young people who present with troubled and troubling behaviours are not out to make life difficult for others but they are out to show how difficult life is for them
- Attention to what lies hidden is paramount
- Parents who are protective in their responses to teenagers' difficult responses are crying out for help for themselves – they are not trying to make life more difficult for the teenager who is troubled



## Key Issues for Parents

- Difficult behaviours are creations, not conditions, not disorders, not dysfunctions
- The relationship contexts of the teenagers' life needs to be the primary focus
- Each teenager has a different father and a different mother



## Key Issues for Parents

- The creation of definite boundaries ensures teenagers take responsibility *for* themselves
- Safe holdings are critical to teenagers' wellbeing
- Parents are responsible *to* teenagers but *not* for them

# How Parents Can Help Teenagers to Find Safety to be Real

- Reflect on their own sense of Self and on whether or not they are still in a place of confusion; if they are, they need to seek relevant help
- Express unconditional love for their son or daughter; if they struggle with this, it is essential to find ways of resolving this struggle
- Ensure communication is of a direct and clear nature and allow the adolescents to come to their own decisions



# How Parents Can Help Teenagers to Find Safety to be Real

- Actively listen, without interruption, and be open to differences between them and their teenagers
- Value and respect (even though they may differ from) the opinions of their adolescents
- Find ways of getting to know what adolescence is all about
- Express belief in their teenagers' capacity to make their own decisions and manage the complexities of adulthood



# How Parents Can Help Teenagers to Find Safety to be Real

- Be specific, in their interactions with their teenagers, both in their praising of particular efforts to be responsible and in challenging actions that may threaten the teenagers' wellbeing
- Stay emotionally present at key times – morning time, meal times, bedtime; a sense of belonging is critical to the development of a strong sense of self



# How Parents Can Help Teenagers to Find Safety to be Real

- Be open about their own feelings, thoughts and experiences, so that they are modelling responsibility for themselves and their own actions
- Provide opportunities for their teenagers to talk about what is happening for them in daily living (without being invasive)
- Communicate from a place of 'I' rather than 'You'

# Fostering Responsibility in Teenagers

- Am I unconditional in my love of my child?
- Do I communicate directly and clearly, without any threat being present?
- Do I request rather than demand or command?
- (Where there are two parents) Do we co-operate in our parenting tasks – as opposed to a false ‘united front’?
- Do I talk with rather than to or at my child?



# Fostering Responsibility in Teenagers

- Do I attempt to understand the meaning of the difficult behaviour rather than condemning it outright?
- From a place of love and concern, do I set definite boundaries around what is mature and difficult behaviour within the family?
- Am I consistent in following through on what I say?
- Do I practise myself the behaviour that I request of my teenager?



## Fostering Conscious Responsibility in Teenagers

- Is stress or marital or family conflict a contributing factor to my teenager's difficult behaviours?
- Are there factors outside the family that may be distressing my child?
- Do I create safe opportunities – such as regular family meetings – where each family member can voice any needs or grievances that may be arising for them

# How Well Do You Know Your Teenager

- What gives your teenager satisfaction and joy?
- What are your teenager's hopes and dreams?
- What distresses your teenager?
- What are the life questions that engage your teenager?
- What challenges are important to your teenager?
- What are his experiences of and what meanings does he attach to sexuality?



# How Well Do You Know Your Teenager

- Who are his friends; do you know their names, where they live, their telephone numbers?
- What are the names of and have you met the parents of your teenager's friends?
- What school subjects does your teenager like and which does he dislike?
- Is your teenager content and challenged in school?
- Which teachers does your teenager speak well of and who are those he resents? Do you know why?



# How Well Do You Know Your Teenager

- Is your teenager interested in any sport?; Does he have any favourite sporting team/figure?
- What kind of music does your teenager listen to most?
- Who are his favourite singers, groups or composers?
- When troubled, to whom is your teenager most likely to go?
- If your teenager drives, do you know that he drives responsibly, in a way that is conscious of his own safety and that of others?



# How Well Do You Know Your Teenager

- Is your teenager passive or aggressive? Do you know what has given rise to and presently triggers these responses?
- Is your teenager interested in reading? What books or magazines does your teenager read most?
- Is your teenager interested in film? What is your teenager's favourite type of film?
- Is your teenager interested in computer games?



# How Well Do You Know Your Teenager

- How much time does your teenager spend watching TV? How much time does he spend on the computer?
- What does your teenager most love to do in his spare time?
- If your teenager has a part-time job, have you met the employer?

## Distress comes from what lies hidden

- N.B. question – how teenagers/parents feels about Self
- To what degree is teenager operating from a shadow self?
- To what degree is parent/teacher operating from a shadow self?

# Troublesome Behaviour comes from Inner Turmoil

## Some Shadow Behaviours of Adults

- Irritability
- Dismissiveness
- Aggression
- Passivity
- Unrealistic expectations
- Apathy
- Over-protection
- Lack of affection
- Violence
- Dominance
- Rigidity
- Perfectionism
- Fear of failure
- Addiction to work
- Addiction to success
- Advice-giving
- Anxiety
- Depression



# Troublesome Behaviours come from Inner Turmoil

## Some Transient Shadow Behaviours of Teenagers

- Worrying about having a pleasing personality
- Examination anxiety
- Concern about physical appearance
- Wanting to be liked
- 'Hard man' behaviour
- Not liking their bodies or how they look
- Shyness
- Rebelliousness
- Anxiety about not having enough money
- Sexual insecurity



# Troublesome Behaviours come from Inner Turmoil

## Some Enduring Shadow Behaviours of Teenagers

- Perfectionism
- Intense worry about examinations
- Wanting to drop out of school
- Having no friends
- Feeling unattractive
- Hating themselves
- Pessimism and fatalism
- Feeling that they are never good enough
- Avoiding contact with their peers
- Intense shyness



# Troublesome Behaviours come from Inner Turmoil

## Some Enduring Shadow Behaviours of Teenagers

- Having a strong feeling that nobody likes them
- Having a terror of failure
- Isolating themselves
- Sexual promiscuity
- Depression
- High anxiety
- Suicidal feelings and thoughts
- Aggression
- Refusal to listen or accept help
- Self-harming



## Responding to Teenage Distress

- “Can’t cure a problem by hurting”
- Reactions – add fuel to fire
- Patronising, moralising, preaching, advising, reassuring do not help
- Parents blame themselves – a cry for help!
- Find underlying intention – to get attention!
- Parents need to examine their ways of relating



## Responding to Teenage Distress

- No assumptions
- Separateness → Proaction
- Proaction → Understanding with Compassion
- Active listening – let teenagers name their troubles

# SAFE HOLDINGS

PHYSICAL

SEXUAL

EMOTIONAL

INTELLECTUAL

BEHAVIOURAL

CREATIVE

SOCIAL