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Jeffrey Leiken, MA

Empowering youth to lead extraordinary lives®

October 2009 Jeffrey Leiken Newsletter

Boost Your Teen's Maturity & Future Success: 2 Unconventional Things Parents Can Do Today

New Programs For
Bay Area Teens

**New Mentoring
Groups for Teen Boys**

in Mill Valley, CA
Begins JANUARY

**New: Boys To Mensch
Mentoring Program**

in San Francisco
Congregation
Sherith Israel
Begins JANUARY

**New: Clean
Communication For
Teens** - An accelerated

course for teens who
with involved
relationship issues.
Begins January 2010

Upcoming Trainings

London, UK
Oct 10-11

**Mytho 4 - Advanced
Facilitators Training**
w/ Joseph Riggio

Jackson, MS
Oct 13-14

**St. Andrews 8th
Grade Retreat &
Parent Ed: Parenting
Teens Through The
High School Years**

Mill Valley, CA
Nov 5

**It Takes A Village -
PTA - Parent**

Issue: #14

October 2009

Greetings Clients & Colleagues,

Today's teens are facing a world that their parents couldn't have imagined at their age - one that is critically more chaotic and unstable. Parents, just like teens, need more than clichés and outdated advice about how to prepare their teens for life's realities.

They definitively cannot afford to sit back passively and hope that things will work out or that a conventional schooling will suffice to prepare them for the realities of the 21st Century.

That is not what I do. It is not what my clients do.

If you are amongst the growing number of adults who are disconcerted with the ways we raise youth in our society, I think you will like what you read here. This isn't just for parents. It is for anyone who is helping to raise youth - especially teens.

I hope that what you read here - especially the suggestions and case studies I present - empower you and the teens in your life. Goodness knows, they need it.

Best regards,
Jeffrey Leiken
October 2009
San Francisco, CA

Why doesn't this world renown CEO care about SAT scores and MBA's?

I was watching an interview on Charlie



[Ed"From The Back Of Their Head To The Center Of Their World - Being The Rare Adult That Youth Will Listen To?](#)

London, UK
Nov 20-22,
Jan 22-24
[HeroPath For Teens](#)

Princeton, NJ
Dec 2-3
MythoSelf Trainers

San Francisco, CA
December 13
[Raising A Modern Day Mensch In An Age Of Scarcity & Cynicism](#)

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Jeff's Blog

www.Leiken.com

Rose the other night featuring Mickey Drexler, current CEO of J.Crew and former CEO of GAP and President of Ann Taylor.

The focus was on understanding what it takes to successfully run a large business in today's world. Drexler is renowned for turning around all three struggling retail lines (taking GAP from a \$400 million business to a \$14 billion business) and for being called "the most hands-on CEO in business." His lofty track record makes him one of the most respected leaders in retail.



At one point in the interview, Rose asked Drexler what he looks for in a corporate employee.

Drexler responded that he likes people who have a track record of experience in jobs that demanded hard work - like waiting tables or stocking in a grocery store - where, as Drexler says, "they've gotten their butts kicked!".

"I ask them what kind of job they had in high school," he told Rose, adding that he finds this speaks far more to their work ethic and ambition than college degrees. Drexler continued, "I don't size up their college degrees, their GPAs, and their board scores because in America today that's just an advantage some people have. Sure, it says something to get good grades in school, but there are too many people who are eliminated just because they don't pass the test. If you're in school in America and you don't get private training for your SAT, you are at a disadvantage." Since many kids aren't privy to that expensive training, Drexler believes it diminishes the value of what those scores really mean.

He then went on to discuss how much value he places on people with real world experience and how this is far more important to him than MBAs (he does not hire them) and college degrees that can be earned without any real world training.

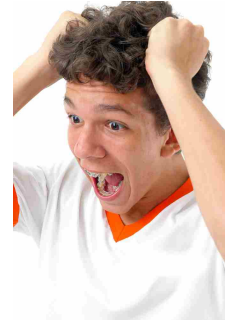
Character, creativity, real-life experience, and ambition are far more valuable to him.

Drexler was echoing a message I've heard many times in my conversations with and research about successful entrepreneurs and progressive business leaders.

A highly respected marketing consultant recently said to me, "I hired a young woman with no formal training in business writing to become one my of top copywriters and editors. She had an ambition and love for writing and an open mind that was ready to learn. At this point I find it best to hire them young and inexperienced so I can train them right and not have to spend lots of time undoing all the bad learning they've gotten in conventional training."

In America, we've become obsessed with formal education, test scores, and the status of the college our kids attend. What has always been a pastime of pride for a select few has now become a cultural fixation.

Many of the kids I work with grow up in communities that share the pervasive fixation with test scores and are at one stage or another of going through the wringer of honors courses, SAT prep classes, college counselors, community service hours, and extra-curricular activities to boost their appeal on applications. Some are grieving the reality that they very likely won't get into their top college choices even after doing everything they were supposed to do. Most are just burned out and cynical about the demands placed on them to win at this game.



Almost all are vastly unprepared for the realities of what awaits them in the adult world, especially now that the world is so chaotic, unstable, and unpredictable.

Many kids, in fact, can barely handle the everyday challenges they face now as middle, high school, and college students-never mind being asked to make decisions that may have significant implications for their future success and well-being.

If they can't handle an insult from a classmate or the disappointment of doing poorly on an exam without going into an emotional tailspin, how are they going to handle the politics, narrow-mindedness, favoritism, corruption, and cut-throat competition that they'll soon encounter in the adult world?

**The reality of this concerns me deeply.
Doing something about it is at the core of what drives me.**

Rarely do I encounter a teen or young adult who can truly act independently or even have an original thought.

Most are followers who lack creativity and rely on outside stimulation for entertainment. While they may, in fact, excel at getting the grades in school, they lack real-world experience and knowledge they need to thrive in life.

Helping young people in this stage of life evolve to be truly ready to thrive in this rapidly changing world, is my life work.

My Evolution Mentoring practice teaches kids far more mature and effective ways to handle life's challenges, not just to cope with the reality of their lives now but to ensure they are prepared for the world they are going to be living in as adults.

This endeavor often means that I must shatter many of the narrow and shallow beliefs teens tend to fall into due to the influence of popular-culture - both that of peers and media. Doing so is often harder than actually teaching them new ones.

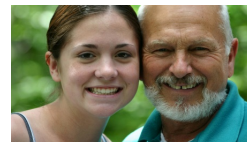


I know my work has been effective when they start to master their emotions to ensure they're in control of themselves, when they handle relationship challenges in more mature ways (like having difficult conversations that others avoid), and when they begin having a much deeper sense of connection to the world they live in and the possibilities for their lives-those are some of the benchmarks that tell me a child is becoming an adult.

We can't start teaching them how to do these things soon enough!

Having successfully navigated this path with thousands of young people over the past 20 years, there are several things I know to be true:

1) Teens need to be in contact with adults who are smart, worldly, perceptive, and committed to ensuring they learn about reality. They need many such adults in their lives. They need more than just their parents, as these other adults represent the world outside the home.



2) Teens need to be given challenges that allow them to master real-life responsibilities. (Note: school work is not real life responsibility; it's artificially created responsibility, mostly in the form of "busy work", and teens know this.)

3) Teens need learning that is visceral. This doesn't mean it must literally be physical activity, but it must be something that generates strong responses in their bodies-not just intellectual exercises in the left hemisphere of their brains. The stronger the visceral charge, the more engaged they are in the learning that leads to growth.

4) Teens need to be addressed with respect and regard for who they are capable of becoming-not criticized for who they aren't yet. When done properly, this brings out the best in them and instills in them faith in their own potential.

Knowing these truths is only part of the solution for parents; putting them into action for your kids is what will make the difference.

Start by implementing these proven ideas:

Suggestion #1: Create mentoring/apprenticeship experiences for your teen. It's easier than you think and more valuable than almost anything else you can do.



Cast Study: One parent contacted three highly accomplished associates of his, all of whom followed unconventional routes to success. He asked them to let his 16-year-old son take them out to lunch. The son was given the task of coming up with questions that would elicit from them the lessons they've learned about becoming successful. The associates were more than willing to participate, even honored to be asked.

The son was resentful at first but soon complied. The only question his father gave him was, "What books do you recommend that I read if I want to become as successful as you?"

His skepticism was allayed when, midway through the first meeting, he found the adult he was with to be a fascinating person who was, in the son's words, "the smartest person I've ever met!" The teen heard countless stories that generated in him a desire to stop being so lazy and begin improving the quality of his life. The son also went out and bought all the recommended books and was surprised to find that none of them were part of the school curriculum.

Rather than resent that, he used it as motivation to keep reading like this, ensuring he stays a step ahead of the masses.

Suggestion #2: Walk them through how to overcome adversity and become a person who makes things happen.



Case Study: A 14-year-old high school freshman in Texas was caught with pot at school and was expelled. More than anything else he was distraught over having ruined his chances to get into the colleges he wanted to attend. His single mom took an unusual stance with him. She told him that if he was legitimately ready to make a change in his life, then it was time to go the distance. She coached him to find something in the world that he didn't like and do something substantial about it. Using her background in PR, she taught him how to make certain he got noticed.

Over the next three years he built a coalition with the Mayor of Houston (the fourth largest city in the U.S.) to encourage adults and kids to take responsibility for cleaning up their parks and recreation areas. He wrote letters, issued press releases, got on the TV news and in print, and built a substantial portfolio of his accomplishments. He then sent copies of this portfolio to every school he wanted to attend and wrote a compelling essay about how this low point in his life changed him. He got into every school he applied to.

The common thread with both parents is that they didn't just sit back and let life happen to their kids, nor did they rely on institutions to do it for them. If you're among a growing number of parents disconcerted with the way in which we raise our kids- especially the narrow way traditional institutions and pop culture shape them- I encourage you to borrow these individual's methods and build on them.

That's what I've done. In fact, I've built my whole practice on what I see working when it comes to raising young adults who build dynamic, successful lives for themselves.

I hope you find this newsletter useful. And to those looking for more, I look forward to working with you further.

Best regards,
Jeffrey Leiken

PS: If you like what I've offered here, look for information about an upcoming teleseminar/webinar series I'm offering for progressive parents and professionals.

The series covers 14 effective strategies on the topic of "Unconventional Tactics To Prepare Your Teen Becomes a Thriving Adult." If you like the two you've read about here, there are a lot more in store for you. Details will follow soon, so stay tuned.

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