

When therapy is not the answer™

“He’s a good kid, he really is. I just have this sense, you know, the way mother’s do, that there is more going on and he needs someone to be talking about it with... someone besides just us.”

Often teens go through struggles with the various stages of growing up that if left unaddressed, lead to far more serious problems. The help they really need though is not always easy to find. This quote above is one of the more common ones I hear from parents who hear about me and find in what I offer something resonant with what they know their kids need. It is essentially, something we all needed when we were their age.

Consider these scenarios:

- Is your instinct telling you that something is amiss in your teen’s life?
- Do you notice that friends who used to come around, no longer do, and the new ones who are (if they exist) do not instill in you a good sense of where things are heading?
- Is the spark of excitement that was once continually present being replaced by complacency or indifference? Is the pressure and stress of school taking a toll, leading to self-destructive behavior or episodes of lashing out at others?
- Are you finding their social life demands are growing more complex and/or time consuming, and becoming a source of stress or serious distraction?
- Are they becoming seduced by drugs and drug culture?
- Are they showing mood swings or behaviors that are uncharacteristically extreme for them?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these scenarios, take this seriously: The question isn’t “Do they need help?” The question is, “What kind of help do they need?”

Quite often, these behaviors are actually the tip of the iceberg in regards to how deep and how far these issues can go – and often when left inappropriately addressed, they have implications that carry forth all the way into their 20s and 30s.

Our culture tends to chalk these kinds of things up to just being “normal stages of adolescence” – especially if the teen is maintaining grades in school.

Having worked with thousands of teens over the past 20 years I can tell you in no uncertainty that there is no such things as a “normal stage of adolescence”, other than the awakening to the desire to become independent and establish autonomy. Most issues they have are associated with either their unsuccessful struggle to gain this, or a byproduct of their having not even tried. It is rare for these to be associated with a psychological disorder.

MOST TEENS EXHIBIT THESE BEHAVIORS BECAUSE THEY ARE STRUGGLING WITH “GROWING-UP” ISSUES, NOT PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS*. What these teens need is help growing-up, not treatment. They typically don't want to be coddled anymore than they want to be analyzed and treated like a patient. *Did you at their age?*

What they want is real answers and real world knowledge that leads to real world results as soon as possible. This is what I teach and is at the heart of what I offer.

I specialize in helping young people who are struggling through the various stages of adolescence. I teach them far more mature ways of handling life's challenges, and a far more comprehensive perspective on life that empowers them to take things in stride and not get rattled and stressed out by the things most young people typically do.

Our conversations vary from very specific “how-to” handle a complicated friend problem (including what exactly to say to address an issue that they are finding difficult to confront), to how to stay centered and composed under pressure, to how to ensure they are making the right decisions for themselves, especially when there is enormous pressure to choose otherwise. They don't stop there. The older my clients get – typically by 15 or so - we often have philosophical conversations about issues of moral and ethical concerns, that often even stretch into the domain of politics, history and social evolution. We explore the complex nature of parent child relationships, and what it takes to ensure they evolve to be appropriate for the age and stage of life they are in now. Of equal fascination for most teens, is the work we do in teaching them how to build real connections with others (not just the “hooking-up” that most teens settle for) and how to create real results in the world, even when the odds are against them and resources are scarce.

I use these conversations (and countless others) to develop these four main aspects of growth that I believe are critical for a young person to stand on their own as a responsible, prepared young adult:

- Developing a positive sense of self that is internally referenced and thus NOT dependent upon external factors – like approval of peers - to be sustained
- Taking responsibility for one's life and being accountable for the role one plays in life events. Not thinking like a victim is the essence of having personal power
- Developing extensive interpersonal communication skills essential for having healthy, positive relationships. This includes making decisions about what relationships to have and how to communicate honestly and directly, as well as learning what to take personally and what not to.
- Developing the essential tools for making and keeping a commitment to things beyond oneself, be it relationships, jobs, causes, etc.

It takes time to get there. It is a journey. My evidence though is that given the right conditions to immerse teens in this work, the results continually lead to helping them become positive, healthy, successful thriving adults.

To learn more about my services, feel free to visit my website, and to contact me for a free consultation.

**** For those who need psychotherapeutic treatment, there are abundant choices in the Bay Area. I have a few therapists I refer to who use modern methodologies. Diagnosis and treatment of mental illness is not what I do. If you need that, seek appropriate help from professionals who do.***