

FOSTER CLINE, MD
& JIM FAY

UPDATED AND EXPANDED EDITION

PARENTING TEENS WITH LOVE & LOGIC

Preparing Adolescents for
Responsible Adulthood



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PARENTING TEENS WITH LOVE & LOGIC

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Responsible Adulthood

THIRD EDITION

FOSTER CLINE, MD, & JIM FAY

NavPress 

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with Tyndale House Publishers



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Parenting Teens with Love and Logic: Preparing Adolescents for Responsible Adulthood

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*To all the parents and children (including our own!)
who were my teachers, and to my wife, Hermie, who gave support.*

—Foster

*To my wife, Shirley,
whose love, support, and wisdom have always been
a source of motivation and strength.*

—Jim

Contents

Foreword	ix
Introduction	1
Part 1: Love and Logic Parents Grow Up	
1. Teenagers 101: Welcome to Parenting Graduate School	9
A Disturbing Call	12
Who's in Charge Here?	13
A Change of Tactics	14
Learning Responsibility	15
The Times They Are a-Changin'	16
Braving the Challenges of the Next Generation	19
A Reason for Hope	21
2. Love and Logic Parenting: Will It Work with Teenagers?	23
Standing on Their Own Two Feet	25
Helicopter Parents	25
The Evolution of the Helicopter Parent: The Turboshaft-Powered Attack Model	27
Drill Sergeant Parents	28
The Laissez-Faire Parent	30
The Consultant Parent	31
The Love and Logic Way	36
3. Back to the Basics, Part One: Training Teens to Act Responsibly	41
Basic Self-Concept—Who Am I?	42
Love and Logic Principle: Responsible Teens Feel Good about Themselves	46
Love and Logic Principle: Responsibility Is Caught, Not Taught	48
Love and Logic Principle: Let Teens Own Their Problems and Their Solutions	51
Love and Logic Principle: Neutralizing Teen Arguing Keeps the Focus on Them	53
4. Back to the Basics, Part Two: Treating Teenagers as Responsible Adults	57
Love and Logic Principle: Gaining Control through Choices	57
Love and Logic Principle: Sharing Control through Thinking Words	67
Love and Logic Principle: Empathy and Sorrow Plus Consequences Equals Success	71

Love and Logic Principle: Consequences Don't Have to Be Immediate	73
Love and Logic Principle: Building a Lifelong Relationship	77
Living on the Edge	78

Part 2: Living on the Edge: The Wild and Wonderful Challenges of Parenting Teenagers

5. Fasten Your Seat Belt and Enjoy the Ride	81
Why Parents Should Relax	82
Some Things Parents Need to Understand	85
Three Types of Teens	86
Again, Relax	95
6. Understanding Teens from the Inside Out:	
Internal Changes in Adolescence	97
Changes in Thinking	98
Physical Changes	102
Teaching Youths about Sex	105
Psychological Changes (Changes in Values)	113
Dealing with Rebellion	115
Let Them Go and Let Them Grow	117
7. Understanding Teens from the Outside In:	
External Changes in Adolescence	119
The Pressure of Social Change	120
Different Circumstances, Same Needs	122
What's Different Today	124
Pressures from Outside the Home	125
Riding the Waves of Trends	129
Pressures from Inside the Home	131
Save Your Emotional Energy	134
8. Ready, Set — Off into the Real World	137
Welcome to the Real World	138
Techniques for World-Wise Teens	139
Parenting Perspectives on Real-World Readiness	144
What Love and Logic Is Not	151
Ready, Set, Go!	157

Part 3: Love and Logic Parenting Pearls

How to Use Love and Logic Pearls	160
1. Aggressive Behavior	161
2. Appearance: Clothing, Hairstyle, and Other Surprises	163
3. Arguments	168

4. Back in the Nest: If an Older Child Needs to Move Home	171
5. Back Talk	173
6. Cars, Driving, and Catching Rides	177
7. Church and Synagogue: When Teens Don't Want to Go	181
8. College Expenses: Who Pays?	184
9. Crisis Situations	186
10. Curfews	188
11. Dating	192
12. Disrespect	196
13. Divorce and Visitation	199
14. Drug or Substance Abuse	207
15. Eating Disorders	211
16. Entitlement	213
17. Friends and Peer Pressure	217
18. Giving Gifts to Our Adolescents	219
19. Grades	222
20. Grounding	228
21. Jobs	230
22. Leadership: Prepare Your Teen to Be a Leader	233
23. Money	235
24. Mood Swings	239
25. Music	241
26. Orders: To Give or Not to Give	243
27. Parties	246
28. Professional Help: When to Seek It	250
29. Runaways	252
30. Satanism and Religious Cults	255
31. Sex	258
32. The Silent Treatment	262
33. Social and Extracurricular Activities	264
34. Sports	267
35. Suicide Threats	272
36. Technology: The Internet, Phones, Pornography, Television and Videos, and Video Games	274
37. Violence: Cyberbullying and Gangs	291
Notes	297
Index	299
Authors	309

Foreword

We have been gratified to see the response that the world has given *Parenting with Love and Logic* and *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic*. Parents on six continents—all except Antarctica—have effectively embraced Love and Logic concepts. During these years since the first edition, we have happily collected success stories of parents who excitedly and proudly told us of raising their children with choices, consequences, and empathy, as taught in *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic*.

While sales have continued to increase, it is apparent that the world has changed in many ways since the books were written. In those days, there were no smart phones, no talking to strangers online, no computer games. There was less premature sex, less violent behavior, and fewer parents struggling as singles to raise teens.

Yet whether parents are relating to their children about a game of pool or about a violent video game, whether they are concerned about their children's knickers being above the knees or about their children's noses and lips being pierced, good parenting boils down to loving and effective parent-child relationships and communication that engender respect and self-discipline, no matter the generation.

Our goal has not changed, but this edition includes information on how parents can specifically handle the new challenges our children face.

We thank the parents who have told us how the principles here have helped them raise children equipped to make good decisions and who are loving, responsible, and fun to be around. We also thank those who have given us ideas and suggestions, some of which have been included in this edition.

Foster Cline and Jim Fay

Introduction

Parents whose children are now turning thirteen know that kids face far greater challenges than they did just a generation ago. Risky behaviors such as binge drinking, drug use, and premature sexual activity are more rampant than ever in our high schools, and children are experimenting with them at younger ages. Research tells us that the levels of clinical depression in high schools now are similar to what they were in mental health institutions in the 1950s (roughly one in four show such symptoms). Add to that the greater availability and greater potency of drugs such as marijuana and methamphetamine, the rampant increase of sexually transmitted infections among youth, and the increased isolation of our kids from caring adults for a number of cultural reasons, and it is easy to see that our children are facing many difficult and even life-and-death decisions earlier in life.

That means parents are also facing far greater challenges than we did just a few short years ago.

Most parents learn parenting simply by doing it. We feel joy and relief when our children learn how to live and grow on their own. We feel the sting of disappointment when an approach fails. We suffer dread when it looks like our children—despite our best efforts—somehow aren't going to “turn out right.”

This kind of trial-and-error parenting can be pretty nerve-racking in light of the consequences looming over our kids' lives.

Do you find yourself wondering whether you're doing the right things to equip your kids for the challenges they're facing? Do you wonder how to equip yourself for the challenges *you're* facing?

Take heart. You're not alone. Parenting is a challenge—and an opportunity—for anyone with teenagers. It doesn't matter what kind of batting average you've been maintaining so far; adolescence can be a whole new ball game.

We (Foster and Jim) have watched our own children grow through adolescence, and we have dealt with thousands of other parents and teens through our respective professions of psychiatry and education. We have some coaching tips we're convinced will help you.

The Love and Logic Approach

We offer an approach called “Parenting with Love and Logic.” We spelled it out in an earlier book by that name. You may have read it, learned its principles, and applied them to your children.

If you haven’t read *Parenting with Love and Logic*, you might find it helpful to get hold of a copy, especially to read the first part, although we will cover many of those same principles from a different perspective in this book specifically about teens. If you have read *Parenting with Love and Logic*, you’ve got a good jump on the material here. When you come to sections you’re familiar with, read them as a refresher course in Love and Logic parenting, or simply skim through them.

Why do we call our approach “Love and Logic parenting”? The first half, *love*, is essential to parenting. As you will learn, however, *love* does not mean hovering around your teens to protect them from all the rocks flung at them by the world. Nor does *love* mean tolerating outlandish, disrespectful, or illegal behavior. Rather, *love means maintaining a healthy relationship with our teens, empowering them to make their own decisions, to live with their own mistakes, and to grow through the consequences.*

The second half of our approach, *logic*, centers on the consequences themselves. Most decisions and mistakes lead to logical consequences. And those consequences, when accompanied by empathy—compassion for the disappointment, frustration, and pain that teens experience—will drive home lessons powerfully enough to change a teen’s thinking for a lifetime. In other words, *logic allows our kids to figure out for themselves the cause-and-effect patterns of how their decisions and behaviors lead to certain consequences; it allows them to know that we love, support, and feel empathy for them in their situations but will not bail them out; and it allows responsibility to develop in them as they work through their difficulties and solve their problems for themselves.*

Using Love and Logic doesn’t mean we transfer all of our answers or values to our teens. Instead we help place them in situations where they can discover answers and values on their own.

Who Is an Adolescent?

Although this book is called *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic*, it is actually about parenting adolescents. The definition of *teen* is clear: A teen is someone who exists between his or her thirteenth and twentieth birthday. *Adolescent* is a bit more ambiguous. An adolescent can be packaged as a child of ten. Or as an adult of forty, living with his parents and acting fourteen. Or as a man married to a woman who plays the role of mother to a husband acting seventeen.

So how do you know if your child is an adolescent and that the examples and advice given in this book apply to your situation? For our purposes, an adolescent is a person who (1) is newly dealing with intense physical and social changes, (2) has the ability (whether or not it is used) to figure out how to express himself or herself, and (3) is capable of making productive, healthy decisions—hormones or no.

This definition incorporates important conditions, and this book will be most helpful if all three conditions are met.

An adolescent is experiencing life's most intense changes. These adjustments include changes in appearance and in bodily urges. An adolescent also knows that within a relatively short time, he or she will be living in a different place, with different expectations, with new people, expressing himself or herself in new ways.

In early adolescence our children begin to develop the ability to think like adults, taking the great leap from concrete thinking to understanding metaphors and similes. They are able to weigh abstract concepts, and they wonder if the means really do justify the ends. Let's look at an example. A parent asks his or her child, "What does it mean that people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?" If the child answers about glass breaking, then he or she is a concrete thinker. If the child says something along the lines of, "You better be careful before you say something about someone else when the same thing could be said about you," then he or she is an abstract thinker.

The ability of our adolescents to see cause-and-effect relationships, to apply situational ethics, to put things into an adult perspective, and to recognize parental and societal shortcomings has the potential to cause all sorts of tension between us and our children. These changes

may make rebellion more likely, but they also make deep and delightful parent-child relationships possible.

It's not an easy job to parent children who are reaching the threshold of adulthood, coping with an updated brain, experiencing new feelings, and immersing themselves in new experiences. Parenting styles that vary from demanding and controlling to permissive and over-accommodating may be marginally effective with younger children, but they are doomed to failure when used with adolescents. It is therefore our privilege—and blessing, really—to offer the philosophy, tools, and techniques that will help you parent your adolescent toward responsible adulthood.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is written in three sections. Part 1 adapts concepts from *Parenting with Love and Logic* and discusses applying them specifically to teenagers. In it we discuss effective and ineffective parenting styles. We also explain how teens deal with self-esteem, control, decisions, and consequences, and how parents meet the consequences of their teens' decisions with empathy. These concepts lay the foundation for effectively parenting teens.

In part 2 we explore development in teens: how children grow from childhood into adolescence (and how parents go through growth phases with them!) and how they react to internal as well as external change. We conclude this section with practical guidelines and encouragement for parents on how to raise responsible teenagers.

In part 3 we get down to nuts-and-bolts specifics. We offer thirty-seven Love and Logic “pearls” dealing with everyday problems and issues most parents will face during their children's teenage years. Although these strategy nuggets are short and to the point, they should be read only after the principles in the first two parts of the book have been studied and understood.

We believe that Love and Logic parenting works, or we wouldn't have written this book. More than three decades of research, teaching, refining its methods, and seeing it work time and again have made us confident of its effectiveness. But no parenting system works perfectly

every time. Over the years, we have emphasized key factors that keep the bond of our relationship with our teens strong. We have added techniques that neutralize arguments and have made various other changes. As the years have passed, we have discovered no other system as effective as Love and Logic for building adolescents into responsible adults.

Actually, Love and Logic parenting is not so much a system as an attitude. When it's applied in the context of a healthy relationship with our teens, this attitude will free them to grow in maturity as they grow in years. It will teach them to think, to decide, and to live with their decisions. They will learn responsibility as we learn to live with less control and make peace with our own abilities and shortcomings. As our children grow older and wiser, we'll gain not just a more mature child, but a lifelong adult friend as well.

Not all teens are alike, of course. Children who seemed so similar when they were younger than age eleven develop in much different ways in their teenage years. No book on teenagers can anticipate every physical change or every outside influence.

Therefore, in this book we assume that although teens share basic similarities, each family has its own kind of child. One teen's rebellion is another teen's independence. The closeness and quality of the parent-child relationship will vary from one family to another. And some kids are just plain different.

Another assumption we're making is that the principles in this book will not be abused. A how-to book, especially one that offers advice on a matter as sensitive as parenting teenagers, can often be misused. For example, just because we believe that teens should live with the consequences of their decisions in no way implies that parents should look the other way if their children are involved in life-threatening acts such as playing with loaded weapons. Adolescents are still under our guardianship because they still need loving guides and consultants as they face the challenges of their times.

We also assume that parents who read this book are caring and loving people. Abusive parents could use these principles and possibly cause harm to their teen. Unfortunately, most parents who are abusive don't recognize or acknowledge it. Parents who suspect that they may be abusive should seek professional advice.

We believe parents face no greater challenge—and have no greater opportunity—than to guide their children through the teen years so they grow to enjoy productive, happy, and responsible adult lives. We believe that this book will help parents meet that challenge and rejoice in that opportunity. It's never too late to start parenting the Love and Logic way.

PART 1

**LOVE AND LOGIC
PARENTS GROW UP**

1

Teenagers 101: Welcome to Parenting Graduate School

Jake had never been what you'd call bad, but as he grew into the teen years, he wasn't what you'd call good either. He was sort of a not-nice, mister-in-between type of adolescent. At sixteen Jake was moody and detached from his parents. He wasn't in-your-face rebellious but simply preferred to respond to his folks as he would any other dust mote that floated through the house. That is, he really didn't relate to his parents unless he wanted something. When at home, he would retire moodily to his room.

For a parent, sometimes being ignored can be even more painful than putting up with overtly negative nasty-isms. "It's not that we didn't deserve it," Jake's mother, Tammy, recounted.

We had always given Jake pretty much what he wanted. We rescued him from his own mistakes and worked hard to give him all the material things that Gary and I never had. We knocked ourselves out trying to please that kid, so, of course, he had no respect for us at all. Probably just being around us reminded him unconsciously of whom he had internalized as a role model. We didn't understand all that back in those days. Gary calls them the pre-Love and Logic WJDGI days—meaning "We just didn't get it."

Gary and I had just finished our first Love and Logic class, and we were down in the dumps. Here we were with this

noncommunicative and aloof human being that we ourselves had created. We were going through the if-only-we-had-found-Love-and-Logic-ten-years-ago routine, feeling kind of hopeless, when God and luck brought us a critical “significant learning opportunity” that helped snap everything around and get us going in a great new direction.

I arrived home from work and received a call from a Sergeant Robert Kenner. He said that some kid they had picked up had copped a plea and had fingered Jake as being one of a twosome that had tried to rip off a few watches from Walmart. It was Jake’s friend Chris, who had been identified on video surveillance and preferred to share the glory. No honor among thieves, you know.

Sergeant Kenner said he’d be dropping by the house. I think Jake knew from my end of the conversation what the call had been about, and I know he expected the usual WJDGI routine, “Oh, woe is us” with hand-wringing angst from me and rage from his dad. But by then a new day had started to dawn, and I said, “That was an interesting call. The cops will be here shortly. Good luck, Jake. I’m curious to know how you will handle it.”

Right then and there, as I looked at the utter surprise and consternation on his face, I felt this overwhelming joy screaming inside me, saying, “You did it! You did it!” That was a milestone for this hovering mother and made the class worth every penny.

When Sergeant Kenner arrived, he had a long talk with Jake. I reveled in staying out of it and feeding the dog, who had been a lot more responsive than Jake had been recently. Kenner said he was taking Jake downtown, and I merely said, “I understand,” instead of variations on “Oh no!” or “How long?” or “Oh dear!” or “When can I pick him up?” Jake looked absolutely horror struck at my simply “understanding” the situation.

As Kenner prepared to take Jake, resplendent in cuffs, to the squad car, I asked if I could talk to him alone, and he said yes. When he came back, I asked him how long he might keep Jake, and he said he couldn’t keep him long. Jake was a juvenile and

they couldn't hold him on this first offense, but he would like to take him down and get fingerprints.

I asked him if he could *not* let Jake know that he couldn't be kept in a cell—or even put in one! Would he help me with a plan? Yes, he would. We cooked up all the details together there in the kitchen. As we talked about how we would handle it, I could see this officer looking at me appreciatively, like I was some kind of great mom or something! Wow, that was new! Nobody had ever accused me of *that* before.

Sergeant Kenner left with Jake, who was sitting forlornly in the back of the squad car with lights flashing and siren wailing, and we put the plan into action. [Kenner] phoned me on his cell phone on the way downtown to the city jail and activated the speaker on the phone so Jake could hear our conversation. As prearranged, [he] said, “You can come down and pick Jake up in a couple hours.”

I said, “Gee, officer, I'm sorry, but I have other things to do.”

“So, when *can* you pick him up?”

“Well, not today, *that's* for sure.”

“Lady, we don't have any room in juvie, so he'll have to be in the adult cells, and we're tight on room there too. We're packed with pedophiles and sex abusers who are in lock-up right now.”

“Officer, you do whatever you need to do, but I just don't have time today.”

“Lady, do you know what could happen?!”

“Officer, I'm not the one who ripped off Walmart. Jake made some poor choices and needs to handle the consequences, but he's tough, officer. I'm sure he'll be just fine.” At that point I heard Jake actually starting to wail in the background, “Mom, pick me up.” That's when this great officer disconnected, saying, “Okay, lady, but don't say I didn't warn you.”

They could hold Jake only for three hours, so that's when I went down to the jail. They pulled Jake off a wooden bench where he had been sitting the whole time, and he literally ran toward me and threw his arms around me. “Thank you, Mom!

Thank you, Mom!” I hadn’t been hugged like that for years. Then he started to weep.

It was the beginning of a whole new life with Jake. Truly, since that day, he has treated us with respect, been responsible, and is almost always fun to be around, but I can’t give him *all* the credit. We’ve changed too. I know we now come through a lot less critical and more accepting—but not always *approving*—on some things. Now we are massively consequential rather than “ranting, raving, and rescuing.”

A Disturbing Call

Sandy and Alan Frank surveyed the dinner table. The silver, china, lighted tapers, and platters were decked out to a turn. They nodded to their guests—colleagues from Alan’s law firm—and all sat down to what promised to be a perfect evening of home entertaining.

Alan and Sandy could count on a quiet evening; their teenage son Ryan was out on a date. Despite their outward ease with their guests, though, these parents harbored anxiety about their increasingly wayward son.

That anxiety wound into a knot when the phone rang during dessert. Sandy answered the phone and called for Alan with a trembling voice. Ryan and Desiree were being held at the sheriff’s office. They had both been drinking, so Ryan—in a gesture of chivalrous cowardice—let Desiree drive. She drove the car over a curb, conveniently across the street from the police station, and shredded a tire. Both got tickets. The officer wanted to know when Alan and Sandy could come by to bail them out.

Sandy’s worst fears were realized. Her eighteen-year-old had formally embarked on a life of crime. Her face pale, she groped her way back to the table. When her guests asked what was wrong, she responded with a flat, this-happens-all-the-time voice, “Oh, the sheriff’s department called and said they are detaining Ryan.”

Alan, still on the phone, decided then and there to change his parenting style. He and Sandy had recently attended a seminar on parenting with Love and Logic and realized they needed to do some things differently.

Instead of coming to Ryan's rescue or getting nasty as they used to do, Alan decided to let Ryan learn some responsibility and grow up.

"We're not coming down to the station to pick up Ryan," he told the officer.

"Well, Mr. Frank, if you don't pick him up, I'll have to lock him up."

"Well, officer, whatever it takes."

Alan, sporting a nervous grin, returned to the dining room just as Sandy was clearing the table. She was fumbling for a polite way to end the evening, escort her guests to the door, and then drive to the station to bail out Ryan. Alan walked in, tossed a pack of cards on the table, and said, "Let's play Hearts." He pulled the stunned Sandy aside, smiled, and said, "Let's not spoil a nice evening."

Who's in Charge Here?

For years, Ryan had appeared headed for a life of irresponsibility. He lived like a slob and had increasingly resisted his parents' badgering about his sloppy appearance, grungy clothes, messy room, and that "infernal music" thudding through the walls.

At thirteen, Ryan simply "forgot" to do his chores.

The older he grew, the more defiant he became. At seventeen, he started drinking even on school nights and experimenting with drugs, both of which were murder on his grades. He went out with girls running with the wrong crowd, such as Desiree, telling his dad, "She comes from a broken home and needs me as a counselor," prompting Alan to counter sarcastically, "Just what kind of counseling techniques are you using?"

Ryan had long since blown off the hallowed family tradition of kissing his parents good-night. Now they were lucky if he just yelled through their master bedroom door, "I'm home."

Alan responded to Ryan's moral slide by losing his temper and yelling. "You smell like a fermentation vat!" he would greet his son after a night out. Or "You have the social traits of a bum!"

Sandy would mutter aloud, "I know this is a kid I wouldn't take off the shelf myself."

Ryan, of course, just sneered. He had his parents emotionally eating out of his hand, and he knew it.

They knew it too. But they felt helpless to reassert control.

Then Alan and Sandy attended a seminar that introduced them to the Love and Logic parenting approach. They learned that parents should take care of themselves first, let their children own their own problems, and allow them to live with the consequences of their decisions.

A Change of Tactics

After the guests from Alan's law firm had gone home, Alan and Sandy had another opportunity to apply those principles. At 11:00 p.m., while they were lying awake wondering if they had done the right thing, the phone rang.

"Yes, who is it?" Alan answered.

"Dad!" came Ryan's urgent voice over the phone. "Dad, it's pretty bad down here."

"Hey, pal, is it really that bad?" Alan went on the offensive. "Let's agree that if I get thrown into the hoosegow, *you* won't rescue *me*."

That was too much for the rattled Ryan. "Okay, be that way!" he shouted, and slammed down the phone.

The phone rang fifteen minutes later. This time Sandy answered.

"Mrs. Frank? This is Julie. I'm a counselor at the detention center. Mrs. Frank, I'm so proud of you and your husband. Ryan is just fine. You'd be surprised at how many parents come down here and bail their kids out. Parents like you deserve a medal."

Alan and Sandy held off the next day as well, but Desiree's mother bailed out the two teens. Sandy was dreading the coming confrontation. However, Ryan didn't come home right away. He delayed his return in fear of his parents' anger.

When Ryan did arrive home, he was surprised to find that his parents weren't mad at him. His arrest was his responsibility, they communicated. They weren't going to berate him, but they weren't going to rescue him either.

This response defused any anger or defensiveness on Ryan's part. Now that he knew the situation was his responsibility, he was open to doing something about it.

Ryan told his parents that he would need to earn money to reimburse

Desiree's mom for bail, to get the car out of impoundment, to tow it to a garage, and to have a new tire put on. "This is the most expensive date I've ever been on," he exclaimed.

Sandy was amazed at Ryan's respectful and responsible response. "After that experience, we never used the rant-and-rave method again with the kids," she commented.

Rather than becoming a derelict, Ryan went on to college and eventually graduate school. He became a social worker worrying about getting grants to make the world a better place. Alan describes him as a "picture of social responsibility."

Sandy now says, "It's easy for us to forget that adolescence is a phase for the teen and for us too. But if you use the right techniques, it shortens the bad phases."

Learning Responsibility

Lori, the mother of fourteen-year-old Abby, had been looking forward to the evening for some time. After preparing to go out, she went to the closet to grab the \$389 leather coat she had just bought, excited about wearing it for the first time. The coat wasn't there.

Lori immediately knew where it was. Abby was about her size and had been getting into the habit of borrowing her things without asking.

Later that evening, Lori waited up for her daughter, stewing in anger. When Abby got home, she did indeed have the coat on—and there was paint on the sleeve.

"Abby," her mother began, "how could you have done such a thing! You know I just bought that coat."

"Oh, Mom, it's not a big deal."

"Not a big deal! I just bought that coat, and now there's paint on the sleeve."

"That wasn't my fault. It was an accident. Besides, if you weren't so stingy and ever bought me anything nice for myself, I wouldn't have to borrow your stuff to wear."

At that, Lori was ready to hit the roof, but she had been taking a Love and Logic class and knew she was too emotional to deal with the

situation at that moment. “Abby,” she said, mustering her self-control, “I love you too much to argue with you, and I am in no state to solve this right now, but you wore the jacket without permission and you are going to have to find a solution for this. Let’s go to bed and we can discuss it again later. Let me know what you figure out.”

Later the next day, Lori again approached her daughter about the coat. “Have you thought about what you are going to do?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Can’t you just ground me or something?”

“Well, that wouldn’t really solve the problem, would it?”

“I guess not.”

“Would you like me to give you some options?”

“I guess so, okay.”

“Well, you could buy a new coat.”

“How much did it cost?”

“Three hundred and eighty-nine dollars.”

“I can’t do that! I don’t have that kind of money.”

“Okay, well, you could just blow it off.”

“Oh, I couldn’t do that. You’d never forget what happened and never let me forget it either.”

“Well, you are right there. Another option would be to take it to a leather expert and see what they could do to get the paint off.”

Abby chose that option and found that for thirty-five dollars the cleaner would try to get the paint off the jacket, but would not guarantee the work. When she offered to give Lori the thirty-five dollars to make it even, Lori again refused and handed the problem back to her daughter. Ultimately, Abby would have to find a solution on her own, whether it was to try the cleaners or hold a garage sale of her own things to pay for the jacket.

It is better for a fourteen-year-old to learn fiscal responsibility by “going bankrupt” at that age rather than when she is older and has others relying on her. Either way, Abby would provide the solution.

The Times They Are a-Changin’

Tammy, Gary, Sandy, Alan, and Lori all received a graduate-level education in parenting through their experiences. Their previous “schooling”

hadn't prepared them for the intensity of the joys, sorrows, and dilemmas they faced daily and sometimes hourly with a teenager—from relationships, to jobs, to fashion, to loud music, to broken hearts, to broken laws.

Parents of teenagers invariably find out—if they haven't found out already—what these five parents learned: *Children change*. And what a change!

Just a few years ago, we were changing diapers, reinforcing basic manners, ferrying kids here and there, assisting them with homework, watching them play. Sure, we lost our temper at times, and sometimes even felt that we were losing our mind. And yes, there were the inevitable and seemingly endless challenges to our parental authority. But even through the hard lessons, we were still the parents. Our children were still within our control.

But then along came a phase change that sent us scrambling back for more education: a graduate course in “Teenagers.”

All of a sudden, our kids didn't look the same anymore. Benny used to be satisfied with double-knee jeans and a T-shirt. Jocelyn used to let Mom buy her clothes. Now Ben Junior wears jeans with holes—and not just at the knees—and Jocelyn has a close personal relationship with every clothing clerk at the mall. Sometimes they dress as if every day were Halloween. These kids are going through bodily transformations that we think no doctor's ever heard of. Ben Junior towers above Dad and can lift Mom off the floor with one hand. Jocelyn looks good—too good—in skin-tight, midriff-baring clothes.

Fact is, children go through more physical changes in five years of adolescence than at any other time during their lives:

- Their brains change so they can think abstractly. They may question your faith, and they're not too sure they believe in you either.
- Their hormones rage as never before, and they are susceptible to everything from incredible growth spurts to extreme mood swings.
- Their bodies produce more oil, making their faces break out and sending them into emotional tailspins over zits.
- And, in case you forgot, they become fertile.

Modern parents face a number of challenges. Children seem to be maturing at younger ages, and societal influences are bombarding families and teens at warp speed, with incredible and sometimes catastrophic effects.

These social upheavals have scattered families in their wake — chief among them the “traditional” family of a working father, homemaking mother, and children, which is found in less than one in four households today.¹ This is old news to most of us. But what we really have trouble comprehending is the extent of the revolution in teen life. Consider:

- Homicide and suicide are the second and third leading causes of death among those 15 to 24, behind unintentional injuries.
- Of unintentional injuries leading to death, traffic accidents account for most of them,² and roughly 29 percent of accidents for 15- to 20-year-olds involve a driver who had been drinking.³
- In 2002 and 2003, more than one in five persons aged 16 to 20 reported that they had driven in the past year while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs.⁴
- According to the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey done by the Center for Disease Control, one in ten (9.9 percent) had tried marijuana before the age of 13, while 22.4 percent were using it. (And 5.8 percent were smoking it at school.)
- More than one in four teens (28.3 percent) are currently involved in binge drinking.
- Of those surveyed, 3.3 percent had tried heroin, 6.1 percent had used steroids, 7.6 percent had tried methamphetamines, 8.7 percent had tried cocaine, 11.1 percent had tried ecstasy, and 12.1 percent had tried some form of inhalant.
- More than one out of every four (28.7 percent) had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property.
- Nearly half (46.7 percent) lost their virginity before graduating from high school (this statistic does not include those active in oral or anal intercourse, a trend that is growing among today’s youth; most of them believe these do not cause them to lose their virginity).⁵

- An estimated 9.1 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) occur every year among youth ages 15 to 24. While this age group accounts for about a quarter of those sexually active, it represents nearly half of the new STIs each year.⁶
- An unacceptable number of teens will drop out of high school.
- The percentage of children living with both their birth parents continues to decline as the divorce rate hovers at 50 percent for all marriages.
- Unless major economic change occurs, this generation of teenagers will be the first since the Depression to have a lower standard of living than their parents.

But family and societal changes are just the outside view. Complicating matters tremendously are the changes on the inside—what teens experience as they live through their own personal development.

Braving the Challenges of the Next Generation

As you watch your children enter the brave new world of twenty-first-century adolescence, you can feel the sting of their volatile emotional reactions to this inner upheaval.

Being a teenager is an out-of-body experience—out of a child's body and into an adult's, or somewhere in between. A teenager may look like an adult while acting like a two-year-old, as determined to establish their own identity as a defiant toddler. Naturally, we're concerned. Are they ready to handle the real world that waits beyond the safety of our protective care? And just as naturally, our teens grow more self-involved, questioning, and peer-oriented. They assimilate into a subculture, adopting distinctive dress and hairstyles, along with music and language that often offends adult ears.

All this is grounded in a deep personal struggle with identity and self-worth. "Who am I?" is more than a throwaway line from television shows and rock songs: It is the central question in teens' transition from dependence to independence.

But our teens can seem like aliens compared to the children we

used to know. We wonder if other parents could possibly have as many sleepless nights worrying about their teenagers. Some of us wonder if our children and our marriages will survive.

Faced with this loss of control, we wonder, “What’s wrong with me? Did my folks feel the same way about me when I was a teenager?”

What did your folks do? After all, it wasn’t so long ago that you were cruising Main Street, singing along with Steppenwolf or *Thriller*, tasting your first cigarettes and beer, skipping church, breaking curfew, and even getting grounded on occasion. Did your folks wonder if you would ever grow up and become a responsible adult? Yup, they did! But you made it.

Now fast-forward several frames. *You* are the parent of teenagers, and you hope in the few years left before they fly the coop that somehow they’ll learn how to make decisions in the real world.

“The real world” — now there’s a phrase to make us shudder. The pressures and influences everywhere today were practically unheard of in days gone by. We’re tempted to sink into despair as we watch our children face life-and-death decisions long before they’re on their own. Drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, and especially depression and suicide confront teens and even much younger children frequently. These pressures can overload parents as much as teens, perhaps even more so, especially if they’re trying to parent just like their parents did a generation earlier.

For example, when Jim’s parents said, “Jump,” he thought they could actually make him do it. Teens today know that parents simply don’t have that my-word-is-the-law-in-this-house control because of the social, cultural, and technological revolutions since World War II. They know they have a right to be treated with respect and dignity, not autocratic control.

Now teens say to themselves, “I’m not sure my parents are right in what they’re asking me to do and how they’re asking me to do it. And my friends are saying that I don’t have to put up with that.” They are struggling to find their own way. No wonder parents are stressed finding ways to work with their teenagers. And teens are stressed trying to figure out how to live with their parents. We’re all braving a new world.

A Reason for Hope

Is there any hope? We believe the answer is a resounding yes.

We all hope that we can raise our children in such a way that by the time they turn eighteen we can be friends, right? We look forward to meeting them on common ground as adults. But what does this mean?

Well, we know what we expect from our adult friends. We assume they will talk and act responsibly, think clearly, play with us when we want to have fun, be serious for the tough times of life, and leave us alone when we need privacy.

Why can't we expect the same from our teens?

You're probably thinking, *You must be talking about somebody else's teens. Mine just walked in at 4:00 a.m. She won't even be coherent until tomorrow afternoon. The only reason she would pay attention to my expectations is to figure out how to frustrate them.*

But we *are* talking about your teen. The principles we lay out in this book are relevant across the board—from shrinking violets to rebels without a cause. We're going to teach you how to apply them in the task of helping your teens become responsible adults.

Parenting requires not only commitment and hard work but also the right skills. Love and Logic techniques are particularly well suited to the teen years because they emphasize good communication and a consultant approach. These fit well with the emerging independence of the typical teen. And best of all, Love and Logic parents are building friendships with their children that should last a lifetime.

Love and Logic is a win-win philosophy. Presuming genetics and social situations are stable, parents win because they love in a healthy way and establish effective control over their teens. They don't need to resort to the anger, lectures, threats, and repeated warnings that will haunt teens along the path to adulthood. They also avoid the anger and frustration that just work to feed misbehavior. Teens win because they learn responsibility and the logic of life by solving their own problems. They acquire the necessary tools for coping with "the real world."

We offer this philosophy because, although teens' fundamental needs are the same as they have been in past generations and across cultures, the influences and pressures on them are radically different.

Today's challenges require a new approach to parenting teens more than ever before.