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This is the eighth book in the Parent's Guidebook series which deals with community issues.

Andrew Fuller is also the author of *Raising Real People* (ACER Press, 2000). This book has a refreshing emphasis on the parent 'being there for children', rather than on the need to adopt particular parenting 'skills'. This puts the focus of the parenting task on the quality of the relationship between the parent and the adolescent.

A parent reading this book will become more aware of the pleasures to be had in living with a teenager. Andrew Fuller maintains that the greatest gift parents can give their adolescent is an example of how to celebrate and enjoy life.

The eight chapters are:

1. Raising Real People – overview of adolescence
2. Families that work well
3. Approached that don't
4. Teenagers and families through time
5. The ages of parenting
6. Parenting adolescents: the delights and the dilemmas (includes 38 dilemma advice sheets)
7. Parenting adolescents: the disgust, the disdain and the disinterest
8. The resilient parent

RAISING RESILIENT YOUNG PEOPLE

A Parent's Guide



Contents

Introduction	3
1. The Ageing & Raging Parent.....	6
3. The Worried Parent	14
4. The Fearful Parent	20
5. Raising Real People	30
6. Parent's Guide Series	32

Introduction

The American comedian Robin Williams once commented that being the parent of an infant is a lot like being a cocaine addict – you can't sleep, you're as paranoid as hell and you smell. I sometimes think that being the parent of an adolescent is more like being a correspondent at the front line in a dirty and shifting war – you need to be able to hold your ground, you need to look after your interests and you need to know when to duck for cover. Either way, trying to do this while simultaneously promoting self-esteem, happiness and well-being is quite a big ask. This book tries to summarise the ways that parents can promote resilience and self-esteem in their children.

Resilience is the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life. While we would like to eliminate risk from people's lives, we know that we can't remove all risk from all people. Therefore, teaching children the art of bouncing back is critical to their long term well-being.

You cannot tell someone how to have better mental health and you can't give it to them by getting them to read a book. I made this mistake once. I was working with a young woman who wanted to become more assertive and positive. In a moment of therapeutic inspiration I pulled out a copy of Martin Seligman's book 'Learned Optimism' and suggested she read it. She looked at me . . . looked at the book . . . and then, with despondency in her eyes said, 'I'll never get through it'. I sighed and thought to myself, 'well, that was a success wasn't it'. She was right. Books by themselves can only give you ideas, but if you really want to learn about mental health you have to be around people who are living mentally healthy lives themselves.

The difficulty of enthusing young people about life and success has often been associated with a general loss of meaning and ritual in the broader society. The 'why bother' generation seems to find life bland, seamless and meaningless. Young people are staying in school for longer and longer with fewer prospects of a satisfying career and instead holding out for the chance of being offered a 'McJob'.

It is perhaps not surprising then that many adolescents use risk taking, delinquency, aggression and academic failure as ways to express their autonomy and maturity. As Alfred Adler once pointed out people do not learn to try to achieve in socially undesirable ways until they have learned that they cannot succeed in socially useful ways (Adler, 1943).

Young people learn that they have failed from media portrayals of adolescents as criminally inclined, violet young people who end up dead or on the run. The alternative portrayal of adolescence by the media is the pimple free super hero who is able to negotiate the complexities of any relationship, can solve any problem in half an hour, is clearly on his or her way to the Holy Trinity of the material world (a hot apartment, a hot lover and a hot job), and never experiences anxiety about periods or wet dreams (and of course, never, ever, ever masturbates!) The popular media also portrays success as economically determined and therefore increasingly elusive to a large number of young people.

With success being defined increasingly narrowly, and an increasing gap between adolescents biological maturity and society's willingness to invest responsibility in the young, it is not surprising that many young people decide to assert their autonomy through risk taking behaviour,

Contemporary observers often look to the loss of meaning and the absence of rituals in modern society as an explanatory factor in the level of risk taking in young people. Risk taking is seen as a watered down form of a rite of passage that allows young people to move away from their family, undergo some form of transition and then return as an adult member of society. Within this thinking is an implicit yearning for earlier

times when life was simple, men were men, women were women and teenagers were pimple prone, carefree airheads who would eventually come to their senses, find a good job and discover their place in society. This sort of nostalgia was well summed up by a young man reflecting on indigenous American rites, 'I wish I had it that easy. Run through the fire, step on the coals – then it's over and done with. You're a man, everyone knows you're a man and that's the end of it.' (Raphael, cited by Tacey). For young women the process of becoming a grown up is no less perplexing. As one young woman commented, 'What does it take to be considered an adult woman? I don't know if it ever happens . . . For a woman to be considered a total adult I think she'd have to be near the end of her life.' (Buchanan, 1993).

The process of rite of passage – separation, transition and return or initiation – mirrors the developmental stages of adolescence – shifting from being family oriented to peer focused, deploring the mediocrity of the adult world and individuating through idealism. Idealism and risk taking are often intertwined during adolescence and the merging of these into a positive life course allows adolescents to become adults.

There is certainly cause to view young people's well being with some degree of concern. Longitudinal studies show that the rates of emotional and behavioural problems of adolescence have increased over the past 10 years. Early to middle adolescence marks a point of increased depressed mood, syndromes and disorders (Rutter, 1986). A quarter of our young people experience depression before the age of 18 and those most at risk are 15-17 year olds (NH & MRC, 1996). One in twenty of our 15 to 16 year olds engage in self-harm on a regular basis. (Centre for Adolescent Health, 1996).

Andrew Fuller

THE AGEING & RAGING PARENT

Parents haven't changed much – but teenagers have

Teenagers start their adolescence earlier and finish it much later and are possibly more influenced by the media that a generation ago.

The way that parents argue with their teenagers hasn't shifted much. Australian fathers just try to look serious as they say *'think about what it will do to your mother'*. Mothers seem less inclined to say *'wait till your father gets home'*, possibly because they are disillusioned with what will happen when he does get home or more probably because they are not home themselves.

Parents, today, have less time, have to juggle more things and get less chance to talk about ways of approaching child care and teen care issues.

Despite this, parents go through a fairly predictable sequence of stages as their children age.

Three Golden Rules for Parenting Teenagers

According to some very seasoned experts there are three golden rules for successfully parenting an adolescent.

1. Keep them as busy as you possibly can.
2. Choose their friends carefully.
3. Never believe anything a teenager tells you during an argument.

A sequence of 8 stages that most parents will go through.

Stage One:

The Paranoid Parent

Having babies around can turn the average, sane parent into a sleep deprived worrying wreck as they observe every breath. This paranoia initially focuses on the baby until it begins to crawl and then shifts to the book cases, curtains, wall and stairs.

Stage Two:

The Separating Parent

Wondered what you would

do when the kids went to pre-school? Ha! After recovering from separation anxiety, there is the rush to and from creche or kinder, reading, playing, drawing. Don't worry you'll get some sleep some day.

Stage Three:

The Relieved Parent

The beginning of Primary School marks the beginning of a brief period of serenity for many parents. As long as you can endure hearing the phrase *'I'm not going to be your friend any more'*, you'll probably be all right.

Stage Four:

The Anxious Parent:

The late primary to early secondary years bring with them a dose of concern and anxiety as children shuffle their peer groups, boil the world down into two basic states: boy's germs and girl's germs, and generally get into comparing themselves with everyone else.

Stage Five:

The Embattled Parent

With the onset of the teenage years – a great debate begins. Hold onto

your hats and stick in there for the long haul.

Stage Six:

The Exhausted Parent

The mid to late teen years often see the hassled parent meeting the haughty teenager and the results are not always pretty.

Stage Seven:

The Deserted Parent

Free at last!

Stage Eight:

The Involved Grandparent

... or so you thought! This used to be an optional stage but with many families having both parents in full time work and more single parent families, the role of the grandparent is increasingly important in providing day to day care.

The risk of this is that as grandparents become more involved in everyday care they may lose their role as a kind, wise guide to young people who may be battling with their parents.

Quote For The Day:

'We are an earring to the left of our parents and they are but a haircut to the left of theirs.'

Things of Stone and Wood

The suicide rate among young Australians has more than trebled for young males aged 15-24 in the past 20 years. An astonishing 61% of Australian tertiary students report suicidal thoughts. (Schweitzer, Klayich and McLean, 1995) and attempted suicide rates among high school students range up to 11% (Pearce and Martin, 1993). The rates of suicide vary according to area. In metropolitan areas three times as many males as females suicide. In rural areas seven times as many young men suicide.

Substance abuse is also an area of concern with Australian adolescents having the highest usage rate of amphetamines by injection (Premiers Drug Advisory Council, 1996). Binge drinking is rife in teenagers with 30% of 15 year old students binge drinking on a weekly basis. Cigarette smoking remains popular with 15-16 year olds using tobacco daily and this is especially prevalent among young women. Marijuana is used by about 12% of this age group. Substance misuse often coincides with depression as young people self-medicate.

Dieting has become a national past-time for our young women with 60% of them engaging in unhealthy weight loss practices at any one time (Wertheim and Paxton, 1996). Girls are commencing their first diets at younger and younger ages with an average age of 9.7 years (Phillips and Piran, 1992).

Overall, young men are at higher risk of drowning, low literacy, drug offences, suicides, assaults, bullying, attention deficit disorder, impulsivity and expulsions from school. Young women are at greater risk of eating disorders, depression, sexual abuse, suicide attempts and self-harm. Late maturing boys and early maturing girls are especially at risk (Nottlemann, Susman & Inoff-Germain, et al., 1987).

The evidence supports a view of adolescence that begins earlier, lasts longer and is more troubled, with more serious consequences and less rituals to mark the ending of this period. Now that I've depressed you, let's consider ways to promote resilience at various stages of development.

Early Infancy

Resilience is built in the early years by having a stable

environment that has consistent people around to become familiar with and sufficient stimulation to develop interest and play. Particularly in the first twelve months of life, the consistency of care and love is critical. While we know that children's brains continue to physically develop until about the age of eight years, it is in the first year that the template for attachment and security is laid down and that this template will shape much of their pattern of future social interactions. Support to new parents and families in the form of the Maternal and child Health Care system and where need be, home visiting is a vital part of the promotion of resilience.

Kindergarten and Early Primary

Attendance at kindergarten is a protective factor for children. It is here that they interact with adults and children outside the home and learn many of the social skills of dealing with others.

There is a group of children who exhibit distress and aggression during pre-school and school entry, who are at risk of long term behavioural and psychological difficulties. There is also evidence that risk factors in 3 and 4 year olds predict drug use during adolescence (Belcher & Shinitzky 1998).



Kindergarten and Early Primary – Summary of Key Considerations

Common Concerns:

- * aggression which occurs at home and pre-school
- * inability to focus on enjoyable activities
- * cruelty to animals
- * initiation of aggression

Aggression, if not prevented, may develop into an ongoing pattern.

Girls behaving aggressively may be at higher risk than boys.

It is important to know if a child is aggressive at home, at school or both.

Preventative Measures:

- * Impulse and self control training especially for boys
- * Coping skills for adversity where it exists (especially for girls)
- * Social skills and parenting, therapy and parental support
- * Maximise consistency, minimise hostility
- * Protection from childhood abuse
- * Assist parent(s) to develop strategies to resolve conflict 'Stop, Think, Do'
- * Good learning teams and co-operative behaviours

Learning:

- * Use play to develop social skills and the development of emotional intelligence.
- * Link with teachers to develop goals for learning appropriate behaviours.

Middle Primary

Bullying in primary school peaks in Grade 4. Prevention programs include the establishment of anti-bullying policies, effective reporting and intervention methods as well as providing students with a diversity of peer friendships.

Middle Primary – Summary of Key Consideration

Common Concerns:

- * Most battles occur between members of the same sex.
- * Physical fighting and bullying often peaks in Grade 4.
- * Peer rejection.

Preventative Measures:

- * Socialisation and problem solving skills programs especially when parents are involved.
- * Bullying prevention – audits, healthy relationship policies.
- * Positive school culture.

Bullying is a major social problem in Australian schools with one in five school students affected at any one time. Most often bullying takes the form of verbal abuse but may include physical acts, threats and exclusion.

Whether involved as a bully or as a victim, there is clear evidence of adverse consequences for the young person. Victims certainly are less happy at school and this can lead to *more absences from school and more physical illnesses furthering their sense of isolation from peers.*

If your child is experiencing bullying, the first step is to find out about it. Children who are bullied are often reluctant to tell adults for fear that they will make matters worse. Instead they come home with a storm cloud over their head and often re-enact the violence and bullying that they have suffered during the day on other family members.

It is important to act slowly to overcome bullying. More harm is done by adults rushing in and trying to fix the problem in one day (and then often falsely assuming the problem is solved) that you would believe. At the outset, it is important to look at solving the bullying problem as a project that will take about one school term. However, if the problem cannot be solved within one school term, then it is too big an issue to allow to continue and you should consider either class or school change.

The first step is for parents to contact the school and to establish a joint monitoring system whereby the adults, teaching staff and parents unite to monitor and record what is happening. This requires you to overcome the fear that you will be labelled as a *'neurotic, over-protective, hysterical parent who sees their own children as angels and everyone else's as devils and should probably get a life'*. Good schools acknowledge that bullying happens and that steps can be taken to overcome it and take parent's concerns seriously.

At the same time the bullied student is asked to keep a diary of incidents and a record of insults.

The school is responsible for taking on the work of helping the children who are bullying to change their ways.

The bullied student is asked to outline, on a map of the school, safe and unsafe areas. Care should be taken to ensure that the bullied student does not feel responsible for the bully's behaviour.

Bullied students and their families then need to develop strategies to empower themselves in the face of bullying. While it is important that the school continues to change the way bullies behave, it is also important to empower bullied students so that the insults directed at them are not believed.

Students respond to being bullied in different ways. Some attempt counter-aggression either towards the bully or more often towards someone else in their school or family. Others are helpless, unable to respond in any effective way. Some others try nonchalance or ignoring it. Unfortunately this is very

difficult in a school situation and students who have been repeatedly told to *'just ignore it'* often report feeling stuck and unheard.

A fourth method is deflection whereby the bullied student is equipped with one or two brief responses to common insults. These responses are not insulting to the bully but deflect or deconstruct the term thereby reducing its hurtfulness eg.

Some examples are outlined below:

Term	Literal Definition	Possible Response
Arsehole	As stated	<i>Your interest in my bottom is a bit worrying'</i>
Bitch	Female dog	<i>'Your interest in dogs is also a bit worrying'</i>
Dick head	Penis brain	<i>'Thank you I could use another one'</i>
Faggot	Bundle of twigs/ English meatball	<i>'What make you think I'm an English meatball?'</i>
Slut	A woman of untardy domestic habits or one who hasn't done the dishes.	<i>'How do you know I haven't done the dishes?'</i>
Your mother		<i>'Aren't you a bit young?'</i> <i>'Your mother is wonderful'</i> <i>'Your interest in my mother is worrying'</i> <i>'Don't tell my father'</i>

The terms *'snot gobbler'*, *'wastoid'* and *'weasel breath'* are among my favourite responses to bullying. When said with gusto and determination, they often leave bullies wondering what to say next.

THE WORRIED PARENT

BULLYING – What we know

- * One in five Australian school students are affected by bullying.
- * Bullying includes name calling, teasing, comments about physical appearance or sexuality and being left out of activities on purpose. Bullying also includes hitting, punching and kicking.
- * Bullying often occurs when adults are not around and can develop without parents or teachers being aware of it.
- * Bullying is too damaging to allow it to continue.
- * The victims of bullies can feel isolated, depressed, have low self-esteem and have more absences from school.
- * Children who bully are generally trying out the power tactics they see around them. They are not necessarily from troubled families.
- * Children who bully need help to change their behaviour.
- * Effectively stopping bullying requires the parents and the school to work together.
- * Just telling the child to ignore it rarely works.
- * Telling a child to hit back worsens the problem.
- * Parents should not try to intervene with bullies or their parents. That is the school's job.

What Should I do if my Child is Bullied at School?

Contact a teacher that you trust at the school and set up a joint record keeping system in which you keep a note of any bullying incidents that you become aware of and the school does the same.

Meet weekly to compare findings.

Having parents and teachers working together has the best chance of success.

While many students ask their parents not to become involved, bullying thrives on secrecy. It is usually better to go against your child's wishes and talk to the school.

Ask your child to keep a record of incidents and a list of insults and to draw a map of the school marking where they feel safe and unsafe.

In most bullying situations, there are some students who are directly involved,

some who are neutral and some who don't bully. Start trying to befriend those who do not bully and try to increase the number of friends from the neutral group.

If the problem continues for longer than one school term, consider class or school change.

Protecting Your Child Against Bullying

There is no process that will 'bully-proof' a child but there are some things you can put in place to make it less likely that your child will suffer from being bullied.

Ensure that your child has a second group of friends that they mix with that aren't attached to the school. This is particularly important from Grade 4 to Year 8.

Choose a secondary school that has a good process for integrating new students.

Teach your child how not to take the insults of others

so personally so that they damage their self-esteem and believe that the insults are true. See the page on insults for alternate meanings and responses to insults.

This doesn't mean we should excuse other's behaviour but neither should we allow other's barbed or rude remarks to upset us to our core.

If your child becomes more reluctant to go to school, behaves more aggressively than usual at home or seems frightened of going to local places, check with the school teacher to see if bullying has been occurring.

Warning Signs

The signs that a child is being bullied in school include: an increased reluctance to attend school, increased anger and aggression at home, more days off due to illness, more phone calls from other children that end abruptly and wariness and withdrawn behaviour.

Many young people say that they don't use the terms that we give them, but that just knowing that they could gives them an air of confidence which helps to deflect the bullying.

The middle to late primary years are also a critical time for the development of self esteem. Self esteem can be roughly divided into 'global self-esteem' which relates to how we feel about ourselves generally and is important as it guards us against depression; and 'specific self-esteem' which is our estimation of how capable we are at various activities, English, Maths, driving a car and so; there are as many 'specific self-esteems' as there are things to do. We used to think if we helped people to feel generally positive about themselves that their sense of their own ability would also raise. Instead we now know that if we help children to develop specific areas of competence and capability that it raises their global self-esteem. For this reason, it is incredibly important to go on a treasure hunt with children at this time to find areas of competence, ability and skill and develop these areas and highlight the successes with praise and comments.

Early Adolescence

Adolescence begins with a biological event: the onset of puberty with young women developing one and a half to two years earlier than young men. At puberty, the body grows at a faster rate than at any other time apart from infancy.

Early adolescence is noted for anxiety about body growth and shape, normality and abnormality, worries about sexuality, teasing about appearance, bullying and for spending long periods of time in the bathroom.



It seems that it is early maturing girls and later maturing boys who may be at highest risk during this stage. To be the last boy on the block without hair anywhere but on his head makes him vulnerable to ridicule and bullying. To be the first girl on the

block with breasts and a period is anxiety provoking and comments about appearance and body shape are serious business when you are at this age.



At times parents may make playful comments about their teenager's body shape such as 'she's a bit chunky' or 'she's got a bit of puppy fat', 'if she keeps growing at this rate she'll be a big girl', 'he's a later developer' or 'he's not as mature as the other boys in his class'. You could be mistaken into believing that these comments meant lightly and harmlessly are not serious until you look into the teenager's eyes. For them there is no such thing as playful teasing.

The shift from primary to secondary is often accompanied by a lowering of self-esteem especially for girls and low achieving students. Preparing children by ensuring they have a diversity of friendship groups and a higher level of self-esteem using the treasure hunt method described earlier are useful steps. It is also valuable if a trusted adult outside the immediate family can take an interest in the early teenager.

Care should be taken in selecting school at this time. School programs that re-structure Years 6 and 7 to minimise the number of staff and peers that each student has to interact with as well as developing curriculum materials that promote a sense of belonging, mastery and achievement in students is important. Effective transition programs reduce later levels of

delinquency and substance abuse and increase school retention and achievement.

It is no surprise that teenagers become less family oriented and it is certainly true that the amount of time the average teenager spends at Auntie Maude's or Uncle Ahmed's Sunday barbecue decreases. However, families that cope well with adolescence seem to keep aside someone at one time between a parent and their teenager.

This seems to be protective of the parent-adolescent relationship and provides them with a sense of how you function as an adult in the world. It is important every so often to drag your adolescent along to some event, probably several kilometres away from your own area so their friends don't see them and to show them how to live life. Inevitably, they will comment that the whole thing is unutterably boring but just ignore this.

Rather than always be trying to think up things they might enjoy, occasionally take them to an event that **you** will enjoy. Of course they will find it dull and will probably roll their eyes extensively but at least one of you will be having a good time. In the process, you will be showing them that it is possible to have fun as an adult. By seeing you have fun assists them to define what is fun for themselves.



Early Adolescence

Common Concerns:

- * Body growth and shape
- * Sexuality
- * Teasing about appearance
- * Early developing girls and late developing boys may be at most risk

Preventive Measures:

- * Transition programs
- * Involvement of fathers
- * Positive school transition programs
- * Bullying prevention

Learning:

- * Developing the skills of recognising basic emotions
- * Discussion of self-appraisals, life situations, coping strategies & problem solving.
- * Information about sexuality, physical growth and family functioning
- * Encourage reading (involved father in this where possible)
- * Focus on competencies
- * Set goals for achievement

THE FEARFUL PARENT

From the Age of Aquarius to the Age of Anxiety

So you've just spent an hour or so worrying about your child, and you think you're the only one? Without knowing it you've joined the club of panicked parents.

On any weekday morning you can see the effect of fear on our society as parents drive their children to schools that were thought to be conveniently located when they moved to their current house. Increasingly, fears of kidnapping, molestation and worse have resulted in families retreating into their homes.

A survey of 111 country families found that parent's fears ranged from stranger danger to safety in the home while the parents were out completing farm duties. In regard to older children, worries were safety issues on the road and on public transport, isolation when home alone and peer pressure resulting in risk taking.

Australian Worriers Club

The Australian Worriers Club wishes to announce that it is concerned that Members are not paying their annual fees. Mr Tudor of Albury said today *'if this trend continues we won't be able to hold our version of the Desperate and Dateless Ball, the annual 'Poor and Paranoid Dinner Dance'*.

What Teenagers Think Parents Worry About

In a survey, young people were asked to list what they thought parents worried about.

The young people's listing is as follows:

Drugs, education, alcohol, peer influences, safety while socialising, kids having sex, committing crime, pregnancy, violence, making wrong decisions, immorality, opposite sex and diet. Interestingly,

happiness is not one of the things they thought parents worried about.

Some Battles Need to be Fought Head On

At least a third of young people worry and it may be that worrying is helpful in that it prepares people in case bad things happen to them. Too much worry can stop kids doing new activities and 'having a go'. It is useful for parents to show kids how to overcome fears and worries where it is possible and safe to do so.

As children get older their worries become more specific and more complex. Before they reach school age, children tend to worry about imaginary and supernatural threats such as monsters as well as separation from parents. Early primary school kids worry mostly

about threats to their physical well-being but by late primary and early secondary school the worries shift. At this stage, young people are more likely to be concerned about their social standing with peers, their level of ability at school and at other activities. ***Just wait till they become parents themselves. Then they'll know what worrying is all about.***

By late secondary the worries change again. What young people say they worry about at this time includes: school work (51.3%), school (44%), family (39%), their future (32%), friends (29%), opposite sex (18%), their appearance and image (12%), work (12%), sport (7%) and their self-esteem (6%).

Middle Adolescence

After the upheavals of the early teen years, middle adolescence is a time when life gets really confusing. It is a time that young people move from being family focused to being peer focused. Parents notice this time because their child wants them to drop them off 2 or 3 blocks away from school.

These can be the '*grunt and shrug*' years. The happy-go-lucky child of only two or three years ago can be unrecognisably morose and angry all the time.

In addition to perfecting the '*wither up and die*' pout, middle adolescents are involved in a quest. Searching for a niche, a place. Searching for things that seem like fulfilment – sex, drugs, rock'n'roll. At this time they may gravitate towards other young people with whom they unconsciously share a similar hunger. Or they desperately search for a peer group or gang that they can cling to. They may identify with particular forms of music or particular icons. At

this time adolescents appear to be at their most heterogeneous and superficially they are – some being rappers, gothics, metal heads and some being all of those in the one week.

Not surprisingly several psychological disorders often have their onset during this time. Eating disorders, conduct disorders (lying, stealing, cheating and running away) and self-harm often start during this stage.

At this stage, adolescents often have a desperate, uncontrollable air about them which leads adults to act in



restricting, constraining ways. Yet it is at this time, perhaps more than any other, that young people need a guide who can help them to nourish and maintain their uniqueness and their multi-dimensionality.

A guide who accepts and applauds difference. Not accepting the young person's desperate desire to slot into a role, a group, or a good or bad kit persona is very important. Young people don't neatly fit these categories and if we allow them to become too domesticated, too narrow or too stereotyped they can lose their own personhood in the process.

Providing information to minimise the harm of risk taking and involving young people in discussions about sex, drugs and gangs is useful. Ensuring that socially disconnected adolescents are sufficiently linked with as broad a range of people as possible is important. These adolescents may otherwise gravitate to gangs or to delinquent or drug using peers as a way to gain social acceptance. Once they find popularity or acceptance they may then shy away from other, more adaptive peers and thereby increase their level of risk.

Some young people find school to be so constraining that alternative ways of supporting them need to be found. Work experience, partial work/partial school programs, wilderness programs are all possible. Some of these young people will want to succeed at school but don't wish to be seen as a 'try-hard'. For them, it is better to fail than to be unpopular. Talking to the school about developing a system that allows for private study and feed back could be considered.

Many adolescents look back at these years and talk of the importance that a part time job or work experience played in helping them to learn about what they wanted to do. Try to find ways to acknowledge their talents and gifts.

Middle Adolescence – Summary of Key Considerations

Common Concerns:

- * Individualisation
- * Family battles
- * Social success
- * Being cool
- * Finding a niche
- * Sex, drugs, gangs

Preventive Measures:

- * Eating, diet, body shape
- * Adult mentoring, school connectedness
- * One on one time with parents
- * Having an adult outside the family who takes a positive interest in the adolescent
- * Having a prohibitive family and school culture about drugs
- * Harm minimisation programs

Learning:

- * Use work experience and physical activity creatively
- * Goal setting on an individual basis

Late Adolescence

Late adolescence, is the time of facing up. This begins around the senior years of school and sometimes it feels as if this goes on and on until retirement. The pressures associated with completing Year 12, restricted job opportunities and increased competition for, and costs involved in, tertiary education see with them an upsurge in young people who define themselves as having failed and attempt suicide as a result. This is now a

very confusing time for young people and the lack of rituals, markers and milestones that we have for becoming adult adds further turmoil. What are the markers that we have?

We used to have a series of milestones that included leaving home and changing from drinking Ben Ean or Brandiviono to drier wines. We even used to have a certificate called a Leaving which I think was aptly named as people could do exactly what it suggested . . . leave. I wonder what the equivalent of the Leaving Certificate is today when I hear stories of Year 12 being required to work in a take-away food place.



Completing Year 12 is a poor substitute as a milestone as it no longer offers some clarity about the immediate future for many young people. We celebrate the end of the year but generally we don't have an ritual a the really hard time, following the release of the marks. There is no general killing off of the Year 12 experience attended by all students. This leaves many young people feeling as if they have fallen into a social abyss in which celebrations are occurring but someone forgot to invite them. Without rituals to make the meaning of the experience of completing Year 12, there is no catharsis. There is only the

hushed gasps of students across the country facing the reality of their future alone.

For those of you with children in the senior years of secondary school, celebrate at the end of each year – don't wait until the marks come out. A generation ago, just completing the School Certificate was sufficient basis for a career.

Late Adolescence – Key Considerations

Common Concerns:

- * Failing
- * Freedom
- * Finances
- * Sexuality
- * Depression

Preventive Measures:

- * Adult support
- * Positions of responsibility/maturing training
- * Coping mechanisms that lessen self-blame
- * Peer support programs
- * Keep involved parents, even if they protest they don't want you to be.

Learning:

- * Study skills
- * Stress management
- * Role models
- * Project and time management
- * Relationship issues. How to be cool and smart
- * There's more to life than Year 12
- * Disputing fatalistic & defeatist thinking

The Ever Later Adolescent

A generation ago people were considered to have grown up at the age of 21 when they received the 'key to the door'. For many young people, this transition point to adulthood has now been delayed by seven years. It is not unusual for young people to remain living with their families, completing education or working in short term jobs or being unemployed until their late twenties.

As one mother commented, *'I was prepared for the terrible two's, I had lots of sympathisers and allies but no one ever prepared me for the terrible twenties'*.

Despite expectations that young people will be able to leave home and become independent, separating from families has also become more difficult. As young stay in education longer or seek employment or try to save to move out, they are more likely to remain financially dependent on their families for longer. For the work weary parent who has battled for years to earn a living coming home to a young adult who apparently spends the day lounging around this stage can be viewed with envy and conflict.

For the parents of these young adults who may be caring for their own ageing parents, the empty nest often remains over full. This contributes to family tensions often around issues of independence, control and sexuality. The task of raising real people is a long term project and at this stage is essentially an act of faith.

Prevention Is Better Than Intervention

The overall message that runs throughout all of the studies looking at assisting young people to develop good mental health is that it doesn't take a lot to promote resilience, attachment and a sense of belonging in young people but it does take a conscious decision to embark on such a project. In fact simple things will do. What is required is to develop a sense of belonging in young people.

Belonging somewhere doesn't mean being owned or dominated, it means feeling a part of a place, somewhere you feel

recognised for who you are; somewhere an eye will be kept on you and you will look out for others; a place where you are visible and relied upon; a place where you are in an ongoing relationship, for both its highs and lows, with others; a place where, when you call out or knock on the door, they just have to answer.

Obviously, the earlier you give young people a place to belong, the better. The pay-offs in terms of reduced behavioural problems, delinquency, lower teen pregnancy and substance abuse rates and lower suicide rate are enormous.

The connectedness that young people have to family, to friends, to adults outside their family and to school are the strongest antidote we know against suicide, violence and substance misuse.

Reportedly, Michelangelo once described his work as a sculptor as a process of removing the excess marble, concealing the beauty of a the figure within. His job, he was reported to have said, was a process of uncovering rather than creating. Parenting at its best can be just like this.

Raising resilient young people requires parents to have good ears, a good heart and good spirit. Being able to quieten your own inner conversation to listen to children and to hear the nuances of their stories, the values they express and the hopes, dreams and despair contained within them is an ongoing challenge. Most people have two ways of being with people: talking and waiting to talk.

'*Cleaning your ears*' is about ridding yourself of the everyday common garden variety of prejudices, assumptions and the short hand ways of summarising what people are saying. It is always easier to presume rather than to listen. When listening works well you are able to listen for content (what is being said), process (how it is being said) and intervention (ways to utilise what is being said to facilitate change).

A good heart refers to being able to view people compassionately, to see the positive in people and their actions. To be able to see beyond the behaviour to the underlying values and to what the action is trying to achieve. A good heart helps us to play well....

A good spirit means that you take some time to be self-nourished and self-nourishing. Raising resilient children requires you to lead a fulfilling life so that you can show them how it is done. So you can show them that life is worth living, that success is worth striving for, that existence as an adult is more than just struggle and mayhem.

It is important to read widely, to absorb ideas as broadly as possible and then to focus on assisting yourself and your children create a '*handcrafted life*'. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, who wrote *Women Who Run With Wolves*, has a wonderful concept of the '*hand-crafted life*'. Each person shapes, guides and refines their life in their own way. Each person is a little like a potter shaping, honing and refining the overall pattern of their lives. It is easy, and sometimes inevitable, to have your life shaped by other people or outside forces, however, you are in charge of preserving your own uniqueness. Particularly with young people who have an immense desire to fit in even if it costs them their own individuality, a guide who can nourish difference, who teaches the art of being socially successful while celebrating originality can help many young people avoid becoming too domesticated.

In order to handcraft your own life, you have to be a bit of subversive, counter-revolutionary. In a world where people rush faster and faster, work longer and longer and laugh less and less, it is important to remember that it is our connections to other people that give meaning to our lives.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of the four essential questions that I use in my own life to remind me to promote my resilience. These are four questions that are asked in many forms of traditional healing:

- * When did you stop singing?
- * When did you stop dancing?
- * When did you stop listening to and telling stories?
- * When did you become disenchanted with the sacred place of silence?

RAISING REAL PEOPLE (Acer Press 2000)

A book filled with the delights, dilemmas and disasters of parenting

Drawing material from Andrew Fuller's workshops . . . 'If men come from Mars and women come from Venus, where do adolescents come from?' and 'Raising Resilient Children', this book covers the issues of parenting and sets out some of the cunning plans used by thousands of parents.

Issues discussed include:

- * How to build self-esteem and resilience in young people
- * Bedrooms, chores, pocket money and parties – some of the issues that create madness in parents
- * Protecting young people against substance misuse, violence and self-harm
- * How to get your child to learn how to work smarter not harder and even do their homework (occasionally)
- * How to build mental health in children by having fun yourselves
- * Protecting young people against bullying and the ravages of jealousy
- * How children and teenagers argue and why rationalising with them can be a mistake

If Parenting has improved so much, why aren't kids better off?

Times have changed so dramatically that the role of parents has shifted. When children are young, they need structure and consistency. While they still need these things from you when they become teenagers, they are not going to admit it. Parenting has become much more complex because young people are bombarded with messages, information and influences from so many sources. Parents are only one influence on children's development with peers, school and the media playing an increasingly larger role. It is important that parents are actively involved in all of these areas of their children's lives.

Jealousy Saps Self-esteem

In most of us a green-eyed monster lurks ready to make light of our talents

and achievements as we look at what others have and compare ourselves negatively to them. Jealousy robs us of our belief in our own self-worth.

Teaching young people to accept that there can be other people in the world who have good things without it necessarily detracting from themselves is important. Acceptance of other's skills and talents stops us focusing too much on ourselves.

Umpire's Rules Questioned

Pandemonium broke out in the Sibling Rivalry Cup yesterday when the umpire (known as 'Mum' to her nearest and dearest) sent both players to their bedrooms for the duration of the second half. Intense questioning regarding the visual abilities of the umpire to 'see what she did to me' and counter claims of 'he did it first' resulted in a suspension of play. We can only await the tribunal hearing as video evidence

has not been made available.

Swear No More@#!*#@#!

Mrs McLintock of Rushmore was fed up with her son's use of a popular swear word beginning with the letter 'F'.

'Every second word he said was Fing this and Fing that, so I told him, each time he used the 'F' word I was going to kiss him', she told us. 'Last Saturday morning we were out shopping and he used the 'F' word, so I laid the biggest, most smoochiest, most motherly kiss you've ever seen on him, in public. Since then, every time he seems close to swearing he looks across at me and stops.'

Weather Report

Expect turbulence in the form of considerable precipitation before bedtime.

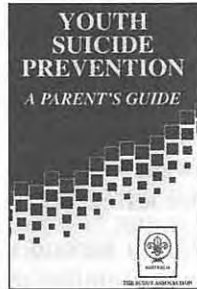
Smog in the form of smoke may centre on bedrooms.

PARENT'S GUIDE SERIES

Scouts Australia has taken the initiative in a number of community concerns and developed a series of small publications to assist and support young people and their families. Over the last seven years on World Scout Day (22 February), The Scout Association has launched a book covering one of the concerns. These titles, as listed below, are available from The Scout Association of Australia.

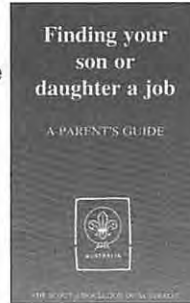
Youth Suicide Prevention

- Comments by a teenager
- Facts and Myths
- Risk Factors
- Protective Factors
- Suicide Prevention
- National Resources



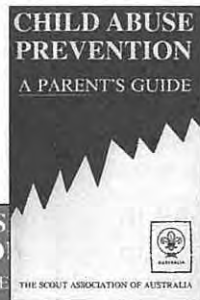
Finding Your Son or Daughter a Job

- How to Communicate with young people
- Starting Points
- Financial Help
- Part-time Training
- What Can You Do?
- Bullseye Charts on Work Opportunities



Relationships

- Communication
- Turbulent times
- Adolescence
- Re-learning
- Time Out



Child Abuse Prevention

- Youth Protection
- Protective Strategies
- Basic Rules of Safety
- How to Communicate
- Scouting's Weapons for Youth Protection

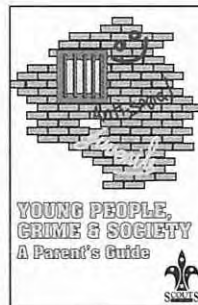
Drug Abuse Prevention

- Youth Protection
- Signs of Drug Use
- Things Parents Should Know About Drugs
- How to Communicate
- Scouting's Role
- National Resources



Young People, Crime & Society

- Media views on Youth Crime
- Serious Juvenile Crime
- Young offenders
- Conflict
- How to deal with offenders
- Prevention of Youth Crime



Issues in Adolescent Health

- Onset of Adolescence
- Smoking
- Marijuana
- Alcohol
- Sun Exposure
- Hard Drugs
- Teenage Sexuality



An Australian Scout Publication

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