

Relentlessness Plays Key Role in Teen Parenting

Is there a surefire recipe for raising well-adjusted, responsible and conscientious teenagers? Probably not. But, as Joe White discovered, there is an essential ingredient that no successful parent can do without.

Joe's Dad

My father, now in his 80s, has always been a man of simple faith, sure convictions and straightforward speech. He's also one of the wisest people I know. When I visited him one time, I asked, "Dad, what would you say is the key to successful parenting?"

He squinted his green eyes and wrinkled his brow, then said, "Relentlessness."

I waited a moment to see if he might elaborate, but he just stared at me as if his one-word answer needed no further explanation.

Finally, I pressed for more. "So, what exactly does that mean to you?"

He ran a rough hand over his whiskers and pushed back the cap he was wearing. "Relentlessness," he said. "You know, tenacity, stubbornness, perseverance, persistence. It means when your 16-year-old smashes up your brand-new pickup, you hug him and tell him you did the same thing when you were his age. It means when your daughter tells you she hates you, you tell her, 'I'll always love you.'

"It means that when your son makes some boneheaded decision, you stand by him and support him through all the consequences. Basically, relentlessness means that you never, ever give up

on your kid.”

Lesson Learned

As a father who had guided two children through the teen years at that time—with another two in the midst of them—I knew exactly what Dad meant, and I knew how right he was. So many times I’ve wanted to just let my kids “do their own thing” because my parenting strategies weren’t working. But I didn’t. I acknowledged where I had failed and redoubled my efforts to improve.

So many times I’ve wanted to say, “See, I told you so!” when one of my teens ignored my advice and ended up in a mess. But I didn’t. I held my tongue and simply listened without judgment as my son or daughter poured out his or her heart to me.

So many times I’ve wanted to give up because I was tired or frustrated or disappointed. But I didn’t. I prayed for strength, reached deep within myself and summoned the determination to do the best I could for my teenagers.

There may be a lot of things that go into effective, successful parenting, but right at the top of the list is the word *relentlessness*.

Relentlessness

Since you have survived parenthood long enough to see your child reach the teen years, you probably know a thing or two about *relentlessness*. You needed that quality to make it through many sleepless nights when your child was an infant. You needed that quality when your son or daughter was young and said, “No, I don’t want to!” a couple dozen times a day.

You needed that quality when your child got suspended from school or kicked off the team or caught shoplifting. And you may have needed that quality when your child was a middle-

schooler—when you were sure some alien had invaded his body and turned him into a creature with bizarre behaviors, habits and mannerisms.

But now—now that you have a teenager living in your household—it's likely that your ability to be relentless will be called upon and tested like never before.

Practical Advice

Let's look at six practical ways you can demonstrate relentlessness.

1. Pray, pray, pray. This habit is placed first on the list because that's exactly where it belongs. The number-one strategy for guiding your child through the teen years is to surround him with prayer. This means consistently, throughout the day, asking God to protect, guide and direct your teen—and don't forget to include yourself in those prayers. Ask the Lord to give you strength, wisdom and courage as you parent your adolescent.

2. Choose to be active and involved. Your love and commitment should be active and obvious. Be involved in your teen's life whenever and however you can. Ask questions about her day. Play racquetball with him on the weekends. Go out to breakfast together. Consistently attend the games, school plays, choir concerts, piano recitals and speech competitions in which your teen participates. Be there for all the important events—and the seemingly unimportant ones.

3. Don't take no for an answer too easily. Of course, you should respect your teen's boundaries, but some teenagers say, "I don't want to talk about it" or "It's no big deal" because they're not sure their parents are really interested. Be persistent without being pushy. Assure your teen that you are genuinely interested in, and concerned about, her life and that you're always available to listen. (It goes without saying that you should, in fact, be accessible and listen

attentively when your teen is ready to talk.)

4. Renew your mercies every day. “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed ... They are new every morning” (Lam. 3:22-23). The promise here, of course, is that God’s mercy toward us is ongoing, continual, daily. As we savor the reassurance offered by this verse, let us also extend this same sort of mercy to our teenage sons and daughters. Every morning should bring a clean slate, a chance to start anew. If last night’s argument was talked out and resolved, leave it behind. If your daughter apologized for the lie she told last week, believe that she’s going to tell the truth today and tomorrow.

5. Nurture yourself as you nurture your teen. It’s vital that you guard your spiritual, emotional and physical health. Do whatever you must to recharge your batteries. Get plenty of rest. Set aside time for fun and exercise. One of the best ways to nurture yourself is by developing a network of supportive friends—ideally, other parents of teens—with whom you can share concerns.

6. Resolve to never, ever give up. Go the distance, never surrender, stick it out, finish the race, hang in there, be steadfast to the end—whatever terminology you prefer, decide now that you’ll always, always be there for your teenager. No matter how angry, stressed out, frustrated, disappointed or exhausted you are, resolve to be the best mom or dad you can be. Whether you are preparing for your child’s teen years or are presently in the midst of them, make a commitment—an act of your will—to never give up on your son or daughter.

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, fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Instagram**.