

Being a Teenager Today

Is There an App
for That?

Radha Soami Satsang Beas




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R. L. Hammons

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Try Not to Skip This Intro

Don't you usually want to just get to the heart of a book and not mess around with the introductory stuff? Okay, let's do that.

The heart of this book is you.

You have questions, answers, great ideas and a few lousy ones, dreams and fears.

You might never want to leave your room in the morning or dread going home at night.

You might have a thing for the person sitting near you in math class. Maybe you can chat up anybody anywhere, or maybe you freeze if someone asks your name.

Perhaps you sit alone in the hallways at school during lunch, pretending you don't mind because you're busy on a cool phone. Or maybe you laugh and shriek with your friends so much that someone asks you to shut it already.

Sometimes you dream of doing something awesome that helps the entire world, and sometimes you can barely help yourself.

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A teenager's world has a whole lot going on, much more than most people realize.

So let's talk about your world. Let's have some fun with it, get serious when we need to, wonder and explore and not necessarily have all the answers.

Let's ask questions and hear how other teenagers have answered them. Maybe you'll hear the voice of a friend speaking, or a grandparent.

Or yourself.

You might listen to those voices and decide they're not talking to you, or something might ring inside. Maybe you'll say, "I don't believe that" or "Yeah, that makes sense."

This book will work to be honest, to be real. It will honor your strong spirit, your courage, your desire to do well, your fears and worries.

You didn't skip the intro! (Totally okay if you just skimmed it.)



Beginning with the Teen Brain

Have you ever surprised yourself by doing something impulsive, wacky, or maybe even dangerous? Something you did without thinking, without even considering the consequences? If you haven't yet, wait for it ... the surprise is coming. That's partly because your brain is still growing up. It's still developing the front section, called the *prefrontal cortex*, which controls reasoning and helps you slow down and think before you push the gas pedal to the floor.

Teenage brains are different from the brains of children or adults.

They're remarkable in several ways and better at some things – like math, music, and languages – than adult brains. Still, parts of your teen brain are like a fancy iPad that has trouble connecting to wi-fi, with a camera that sometimes crashes and passwords that randomly disappear.

A dodgy wi-fi connection is similar to the developing prefrontal cortex. Yours is waiting around

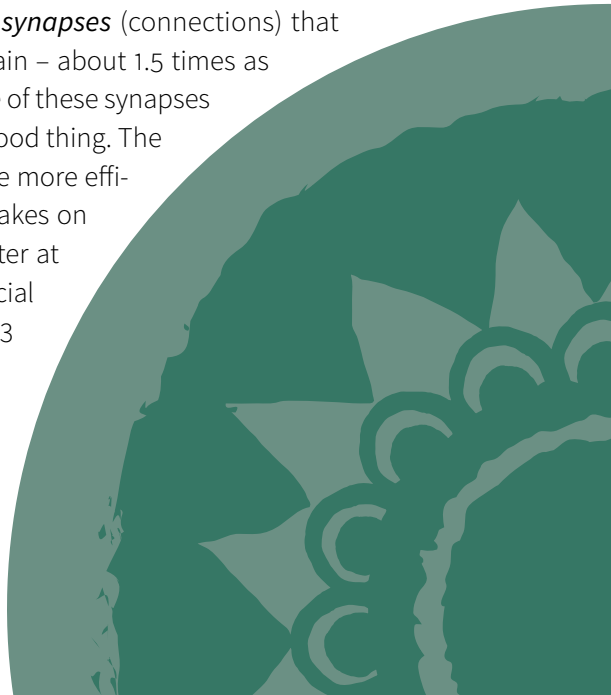
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till you hit your mid-20s before it's going to completely come online and help control impulses and emotions. Until that happens, the teen brain sometimes contributes to problems such as:

- ❁ **Getting into fights. Ouch.**
- ❁ **Misinterpreting social cues or facial expressions. Awkward.**
- ❁ **Acting or speaking on impulse in a way that you'll regret later. That never feels good.**
- ❁ **Some pretty risky business. Even a smart brain can make dumb decisions.**

BTW, *all* of the above are problems for adults, too. But generally not as often.

Some brainy facts might be interesting. Compared to adults, toddlers have many more *synapses* (connections) that pass signals around the brain – about 1.5 times as many. As we grow up, some of these synapses get “pruned,” and that’s a good thing. The ones left eventually become more efficient, quicker to put the brakes on irrational behavior and better at reading social signals like facial expressions. Between ages 13 and 19, this pruning is still happening. Around age 24, it’s usually complete. The



Beginning with the Teen Brain

brain has matured. Of course, not everyone with a mature brain is mature, but maybe that's another book....

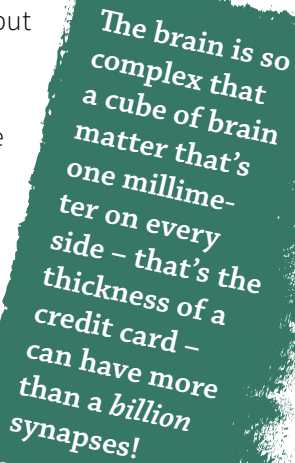
When governments around the world decided that young people could get a driver's license as early as 16, vote as early as 18, or sign legal contracts at 21, I don't imagine they were thinking about synapses and brain maturation. I won't tell them if you don't....

But just when you thought you had to wait years for a complete brain, there's good news. The brain region called the *amygdala*, where reactions such as pleasure, fear and aggression come from, is fully online. Because the amygdala is more developed than the pre-frontal cortex, you might respond to something you don't like – maybe a curfew your parents impose – with shouting rather than calm logic.

So what difference does it make to know that your brain isn't fully developed? Is this the perfect excuse for making bad decisions?

"I couldn't help it. My brain made me do it."

No, you can't really get away with that. After all, you do have *some* prefrontal cortex development.



The brain is so complex that a cube of brain matter that's one millimeter on every side – that's the thickness of a credit card – can have more than a billion synapses!

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Hopefully, you also have lots of good examples of how to handle decisions and turn down dodgy schemes.

Knowing that your brain is still searching for a strong wi-fi signal – that some important connections haven't been made yet – can be useful. It takes some stress out of life. It helps you do a lot of things we have old sayings for: Put the brakes on. Think twice. Take a deep breath. Count to ten.



3

Body Image

Too short. Too tall. Too fat.
Too skinny. Odd nose. Funny mouth.
Hair's not curly enough or straight enough. Feet are too big and legs are too short. Eyes could be wider and, man, if only my ears didn't stick out.

Body image issues – the whole subject is enough to make us howl at the moon in frustration.

The way we think about our bodies matters. It affects our self-esteem – how much we value ourselves and how much we think other people value us. And when teen bodies are changing so much, the problems become more confusing. Puberty is its own world of new experiences – voices changing, periods starting, bodies morphing into new shapes. Taller than your mom this week, developing new curves (or not), finding hair where you never had it before – it's only natural that teens struggle with how to think about their bodies. Peer pressure, cultural standards, body shaming, unrealistic expectations – all these make the job of being happy in your own skin even tougher.

Then throw social media, TV, movies, and zines into the mix, and the urge to howl becomes even stronger.

What's going on, and what can we do about it?

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Think positively. Your body is listening.

You can reshape the way you think.

We'll come to a recipe for happiness. Here's one for misery: Constantly compare yourself with others.

Wait! Delete that! Let's talk positively about how you can **accept yourself as you are and, at the same time, improve what you can.**

The "comparison trap" is a habit, one that can be changed. We've all used comparisons to make decisions – this, not that. Some comparisons can be useful, can help us make good choices. But **continually** comparing our body with someone else's – that's **not** useful or helpful. Besides, simple biology reminds us that different bodies mature at different rates. Just when you start to think you have it rough or that you have an advantage – whoosh! – the bodies all around you change. Yours along with them. All that time spent comparing, feeling inferior or superior, didn't help at all.

Sometimes hormones, overactive oil glands, or diet can lead to the terror of a teen's life – zits. Yep, pimples can be hard to live with, but don't let a breakout control your life.

This body image thing is a tough one, but trust me: You can reshape the way you **think** and change the way you **act**.

Some characteristics of your body are in your bones and genes. Short of drastic, expensive, and sometimes dangerous measures, those

People worry about what others think of them. Tip: Those others are concerned about what you think of them.

Body Image

can't be changed. Your height, facial symmetry, foot size, hair texture, and skin color make you unique.

Other parts of who you are include your spirit, personality, intelligence, emotions, and artistic/musical/athletic abilities. Can you look yourself in the mirror and smile and like what you see? Can you accept and appreciate yourself and notice how *good* that feels?

Accept yourself as you are. At the same time, improve what you can.

Honestly, often the answer is “no!” Young people want to be perfect. But we tend to look only for faults; that's the way our mind works. The combination of a desire for perfection and a tendency to see the worst is a lot to overcome. Start slowly. Practice appreciating one part of yourself you normally criticize.



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Of course, you can both appreciate your body and want to improve it. The problem comes when you think you have to change your body dramatically in order to like yourself or have others like you. And remember the diet, cosmetics, and fashion businesses only make money by persuading you that you need to change your appearance – by using their products.

So what can you do to build a more positive view of yourself, to boost your confidence, to be healthier and happier? To drop the habit of constant self-criticism?

Think about what you do well.

Maybe you're flexible or coordinated or fast on your feet. Maybe you can paint or tear up the piano or put Shakespeare to shame. Maybe you're good at helping someone with their math. Be willing to try something new, something you may or may not excel at doing. Exploring new interests can help you feel good about yourself (and maybe make a new friend).

Get moving.

Being physically active is a dynamite way to have fun, develop confidence, make friends, and get or stay healthy. From running or team sports on a field to doing tai chi or yoga, from mountain biking with a buddy to bhangra dancing, you have lots of choices about how to **move it**. Doing so develops both physical and mental confidence.

Maybe you want to start a strength-training program. Of course, you'll want to have medical clearance and qualified help. With a sensible course of strength training (2–3 times a week for 20 to 60 minutes), teens can build and strengthen their bones and muscles and move better. At the same time, you can boost your mood – “lifting weights can lift your spirits.”

Body Image

Be good to your body.

One way to get a more positive body image is to take care of yourself. Eat wisely and get enough sleep – growing teens need a lot. Shower, wash your hair, brush your teeth. Wear clean clothes. Stay totally away from smoking. These things make you more confident about yourself and more appealing to other people.

Teens are going through physical, mental, and emotional changes. You need down time. Eight to ten hours of sleep every night is important.

Think good thoughts about your body.

If you find that you're constantly criticizing yourself, work on replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. Instead of standing in front of the mirror and focusing on everything you don't like about what you see, flip your thinking. Look for what you *do* like. Try giving yourself three compliments a day about anything – the way you look, the way you encouraged a friend, the time you took to study for a science test. Compliment yourself like you'd compliment a friend. Don't worry too much about those negative thoughts that seem to hang around and hang around. Everyone has them, but we don't want to let them take over.

Eating disorders are serious illnesses.

Sometimes people become obsessed with food, body weight, and shape. Anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating can be a result of those obsessions. These eating disorders are illnesses that can lead to very serious problems and even death.

Let's learn more about them. If you think you might have any of these disorders (or a combination of them), please get help – or if

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someone you care about shows signs of an eating disorder, be a good friend and help them. There's lots of help available, from national hotlines to websites to counselors to clinics.

Anorexia – Here's the thing. People with anorexia often think they're overweight when they may be seriously underweight. Imagine looking in a mirror and seeing a body that doesn't exist, one with many added pounds. This illusion contributes to a whole set of unhealthy behaviors – barely eating anything or only eating very small amounts of a few foods, stepping on the scales constantly (perhaps many times a day), and/or excessive exercise. Because anorexia results in severe malnutrition, it creates a risk for heart attacks, strokes, or brain damage.

Bulimia – Again and again, people with bulimia eat huge amounts of food in a short amount of time. They often feel out of control while eating – like they can't stop or can't control what they eat. Between binges, they may fast or eat very little. To make up for overeating, they sometimes force themselves to vomit, use laxatives or diuretics constantly, or exercise excessively. Bulimia can seriously harm teeth, the throat, and the digestive system.

What helps?

- ❁ **Counseling – either individual, group, or family-based therapy.**
- ❁ **Learning about nutrition and getting help to make a plan for healthy eating.**
- ❁ **Medications.**
- ❁ **Medical care and monitoring of progress. This may include alternative therapies such as acupuncture, as desired and needed by individuals.**

Eating disorders are common and serious. They're also treatable. Help is available.

Body Image

Binge eating – Like bulimia, this disorder is characterized by periods of out-of-control eating. Unlike bulimia, people who binge eat don't try to compensate with vomiting, laxatives, or constant exercise. They are unable to stay on a healthy diet. They eat alone or in secret because they're embarrassed, and they eat when they're already full. Becoming overweight or obese is often the result.

You can like what you see!

Remember that being overly critical of your body is *a learned behavior*. You weren't born thinking you needed to look different.

In a short film that illustrates this point, photographers brought in 50 people and sat them down, one by one, on a stool to answer one question: *If you could change one thing about your body, what would it be?* (In the 'Dig Deeper' section at the end of this book you can find the link to the YouTube video. Watch it!)

People of all ages, colors, and body types answered frankly. "My forehead's too big." "I have really big ears." "Definitely my skin." "Bigger eyes." "I'd like to be taller."

Then young children were brought in, maybe ages 3 to 10.

Some of the kids couldn't think of one single thing they'd like to change.

And the ones who did want a change? Here's what they said: "I want a mermaid tail." "Probably like a shark mouth so I could eat a lot of stuff." "Wings so I could fly." "Legs like a cheetah so I could run fast." "Teleportation in my body."

Isn't that beautiful? Each child felt their human body was just fine. Of course, every kid wants to add a little magic or animal

Think
positively.
Your
body is
listening.

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powers! But as far as being human, no worries. Mission accomplished, no improvements needed.

You can develop some of this same attitude, too. Be your own best friend – encouraging, lighthearted, willing to try, to explore. More accepting than critical, more satisfied than dis. Happy in your own skin.



4

Bullying

He was different from the other students. Damian was sick a lot and always behind with his work. He seemed less mature, sometimes blurting out random things in class. Nobody wanted to be his partner in lab work. In a school where sports were idolized, he wasn't athletic. A few students made mean, sarcastic comments to him behind the teacher's back.

Damian was a prime target for bullies. He often got shoved roughly in the halls and taunted. When a guy walked up behind him one morning and punched him in the kidneys, his parents and the school administration got involved. No one hit Damian again, but the remarks became even more vicious. Halfway through the academic year, his parents transferred him to another school.

Sachi had a group of friends to hang out with – have lunch, text, group chat with in the evening. Things were going fine, except she really wanted more attention from guys. Sachi wanted to change that, and she made a big mistake.

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Sachi sent revealing pictures of herself to a couple of popular guys in her school.

The photos were sent from one student to another. Then the cyberbullying began. Classmates called her terrible names and declared that no one should talk to her. Rumors spread through group chats that she'd sent the photos to every boy in the senior class.

Sachi became withdrawn. Fortunately, a couple of close friends stuck by her. Outside classes, she stayed near them whenever she could and walked with her head down, trying to ignore the dirty looks and mean comments. At lunch, she and her friends began to eat in the classroom of a teacher they liked, where Sachi felt safe.

The school year crept by. Eventually, the gossipers found something new and lost interest. Sachi got through it with the help of friends and supportive adults. Unfortunately, she'd learned the hard way that once you hit "send," what happens after that is out of your hands.

Damians and Sachis sit in every classroom and attend every synagogue, gurdwara, or church. It doesn't matter if they go to a private or public school. Having strict parents makes no difference. They still have to live in a world that is not always kind.

Bullying is a power play.

Why does anyone bully someone else? Who gets bullied and who does the bullying? How can we help?

Bullying

Bullying is a power play. It happens when a person or group of people have **power** and want to take advantage of someone who doesn't. They're worried about **staying** powerful. They get aggressive – either verbally, physically, or online.

Bullies generally choose a victim who appears defenseless. Someone they can challenge or torment without being held accountable and punished for what they do.

Teens who are bullied are often alone in their struggle. They tend to be seen as “outsiders” by other teens – perhaps not cool, maybe physically different in some way, with few friends and low self-esteem. Maybe they're just new to the school or very shy. Gay and transgender teens and those with disabilities are especially vulnerable, as are ethnic minorities and students living in poverty. Racism and bullying are sometimes tied together. (*See the chapter “Where Are You From?”*)

People who are being bullied often don't see anyone jumping in to help them.

In movies, bullies are usually mean-looking guys with big tats covering huge biceps. In real life, a bully can be any size, gender, or race. They tend to have social or physical power and are overly concerned with being popular and in control. Bullying has been described as theatre – with the bully on stage and those he or she bullies as an audience of one or more. The bully needs some kind of reaction. And the more people who see the performance, the better.



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Bullies often don't care how their victims feel. They do care how they are seen by others. They want to appear to be in control. For most of us, deliberately hurting someone else feels awful. (We know that, right? We've occasionally been mean ourselves. But we didn't keep it up. It felt too bad.)

People who habitually bully others aren't stopped by seeing their victims hurt, either physically or emotionally. If they don't feel it themselves, they don't care. Or perhaps they think it's cool to be indifferent. *If they can begin to care, they can begin to change. Bullies, just like everybody else, can become better human beings.*

Listen to Shane Koyczan tell his story. "To This Day" (video) <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>

What to do if you're being bullied:

- ☉ If you're feeling vulnerable, try to keep a friend with you.
- ☉ Stay near adults. Most bullying happens in places where there aren't any adults.
- ☉ Look the bully in the eye and tell them, calmly and clearly, to stop bullying you.
- ☉ If you can, respond with humor. Make a joke. You can even agree with the bully (you know it's silly but it catches him or her off guard). Use whatever interrupts the 'performance.'
- ☉ If speaking up is too hard, walk away and stay away. Or you may choose to learn assertiveness and, if you want, self-defense.

Staying safe and being kind

Never share passwords, online, even with friends. Don't be fooled into giving your passwords to **anyone**. Be **very** careful about posting private photos or personal data. You can't know who will see them or where they will end up.

Think before your fingers start tapping. You never know what someone will forward. What goes online usually stays online. Being kind to others online is the right way to be and will also help keep you safe. **Especially** if you're angry or sad, give yourself time to calm down before you post or respond. Avoid those regrets that come with knowing you should've waited before you lashed out online.

Remember that you don't need to respond at all. You have that choice and that power.

Consider the grandma rule. Never post anything you wouldn't be comfortable with your grandmother seeing. (Or if your grandma's a reckless texter herself, think of a future employer viewing all those old postings you regret, before interviewing you for that job you really want.)

Tell an adult if you read or see something that scares you or makes you sad.

When you make comments about someone else, imagine how **you** would feel if **they** said the same thing about you.

Protect yourself by doing this:

- ☉ Save everything – emails, messages, posts, screenshots. Print these out or save them on your home computer. Don't delete anything until you have saved a copy. You don't need to re-read them, which can be upsetting. Just know you have them.
- ☉ Tell a trusted adult.
- ☉ Tell someone at your school. Even if the cyberbullying is happening outside of school hours and not on school grounds, counselors and administrators can sometimes help you stop it. In some instances, they have no legal standing but will keep a watchful eye over bullied and bullying students.
- ☉ Report harassing comments, fake profiles, and inappropriate photos directly to the social media site.

How to help stop bullying:

Bullying is scary. But there are safe ways you can help stop it.

If you see something, say something. Adults need to know what's going on. Since bullying usually happens when adults aren't around (physically or electronically), someone needs to let them know.

Be kind to the person who's been bullied. Sit with them, walk down the hall with them, send a friendly text. You don't have to talk

Bullying

about the bullying; you can just have a normal chat. This is especially helpful if the bullying has taken the form of trying to destroy a person's reputation. **Being kind** to someone who's been bullied is you standing up to the bullies. It's you living your values. And the bully gets a strong message that what's been happening isn't okay.

Change a bully's behavior:

Schools can – and should – start programs to teach the whole school community about bullying – students, teachers, parents, janitors, secretaries, cafeteria workers – everyone.

There are ways that, with time and care, bullies can see how their actions have wounded others. Not everyone who's a childhood bully grows up to become an adult bully.

Meanwhile, what can you do to help?

- ☉ Be kind.
- ☉ Speak up.
- ☉ Organize a group to prevent bullying.
- ☉ Be the kind of person you wish the world were full of.



Doctor, Lawyer, or Engineer? What about Artist, Teacher, or Carpenter?

Your exam scores are outstanding (or just average, or below). Your parents are bragging (or not). You expect to get into a prestigious university (no way). Any way you look at it, you're under pressure to be a success.

Depends on what 'success' means, doesn't it? Success isn't only about what you can show to everyone else – getting into a top school, great grades, class leader. It's about your happiness. It's about how you deal with your problems. About being positive. Okay, not always. But often.

But maybe prepping for exams has left you exhausted and discouraged.

Your parents' boasting is embarrassing. That prestigious university just seems like more pressure and isn't nearly as appealing as the interesting school you'd really like to attend. Or the gap year you're eager to take.

*What
would you
do if you
could do
absolutely
anything?*

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You're sick of preparing for a career your family wants you to have. You want to be happy, and what makes you happy doesn't make your parents happy.

You'd like to please yourself instead of your parents. But that's a scary idea. You love 'em. They have your best interests in mind, don't they? They believe that the higher status your career has, the more money you make, the more successful you'll be. The family will all be proud. You'll contribute economically. Their friends will be a little envious.

Check out "Before You Feel Pressure – WATCH THIS" by Jay Shetty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSL9oJQQ7Rs>

What can you possibly do about all of this?

***Redefine success. And talk to your family.
Share your dreams.***

Money and a prestigious career do not equal success.

You can't be both successful and unhappy. If you're unhappy – not just feeling down for a few weeks but seriously dissatisfied with your life – then you're not successful. Doesn't matter if you earn big bucks, drive a hot car, go on exotic vacations, live in a fancy home. If you're not happy with your family, your job, yourself, you're not successful.

If you don't get along with your co-workers, dislike your boss, dread going to work – you may be an astronaut or a brain surgeon, but you aren't successful. If you have no hobbies, few interests outside your job, few friends, and lonely weekends, it doesn't matter if you're pulling down half a million a year, you're not successful.

Nice that the opposite is true, too. If you earn just a little more than you need to pay the bills, even if no one's impressed with your

Doctor, Lawyer, or Engineer?

wheels, if your vacation budget is tight, if your house needs work or your university isn't prestigious but you're happy, you're successful. You have friends. You like hanging out at home, maybe going to a restaurant, hiking, playing football, riding bikes, visiting museums, taking a picnic to the park. You're interested in what you do for a living, or at least enjoy being with your co-workers. You do things on the weekend that you enjoy. You care about your family and keep in touch with them. You focus on your strengths and appreciate your blessings.

Sounds like a very good life.

How do you get your family on board with the idea that you don't want to go for the career they're encouraging – maybe insisting on? How do you say that you respect them, but no?

The answer is probably different for every person, but here's a few thoughts to help you:

Speak respectfully. Be willing to show how you feel as well as what you think. All the better if you can tell them you love them. Help them understand *your* definition of success. Let them know that they'll always have your support – financially, emotionally – with health issues and family crises.

Ask them if doing exactly what *their* parents wanted made them happy. (The truth is, it can be tough to figure out our path in life, but we're less likely to find it by agreeing to the route another person wants for us. The surest way is to listen to our own heart).

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Remind them that the world is full of wonderful ways to earn a living. You might want to build or maintain engines. Or fly a helicopter. Teach kindergarten. Own a bookstore. Be a dancer, psychologist, journalist. Rather than being a pharmacist, maybe you want to study archaeology. Instead of engineering, drama might grab your attention. Maybe you want to be a travel agent, or work on a cruise ship, or help build hospitals in impoverished nations.

Or maybe you don't have a clue what you'd like. Head to your school's career counselor for more ideas. Perhaps you could take a chance and volunteer or get an internship in a field you never considered before. You're up for adventure, right? Who knows where a summer job could lead? And your efforts to find and do work will help your parents take you seriously.

If your family won't budge and you end up studying a subject you don't enjoy at a school where you don't fit in – don't despair. You won't be the only one. It won't be forever, and the education will very likely be useful in your life, even if you change careers. Plenty of people these days do that. In fact, that's the norm. As economies shift, families move from one place to another and new kinds of careers develop, you'll have different choices and opportunities.

Doctor, Lawyer, or Engineer?

The point is that you have a big world out there to experience, explore, and enjoy. Be curious and kind, take responsibility, and give respect. Earn money honestly, take care of yourself and your family, and be generous with others.

Success isn't having one of only a few professions; it's being a good human being.

Careers of the Future

3D Printed Clothing Fashion Designer. Smart Contact Lens App Developer. Driverless Car Mechanic. Nano-medic. Urban Agriculturist. 'Green' Living Expert. DNA Scientist. And many, many more!



“Don’t Worry, Be Happy....” Really?

Tara has trouble sleeping. Often she just curls up with her phone under the bed covers and listens to music as the night creeps by. After several hours, she drifts into a light sleep.

No surprise that she’s tired the next day. School, which once seemed interesting, is now just plain dull. Sure, she has friends, but they’re not as interesting as they used to be, either.

Her favorite thing to do is nothing. Maybe watch videos.

She wants to be left alone, to hibernate.

It seems that no one can reach her. When Tara isn’t depressed, she’s constantly anxious about something – grades, her future, her body, friends, boys, pleasing her parents.

Tara is struggling with both anxiety and depression. And the puzzling thing is: ***It seems that Tara has nothing to be anxious or depressed about.*** Or at least that’s what other people think. She has a good family, nice friends,

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she's cute, she's doing okay on the volleyball team, her grades are decent. What has she got to be worried about?

To Tara, nearly everything.

She's part of an *epidemic* of overwhelmed teenagers. The World Health Organization reports that depression is the major cause of illness and disability for both males and females 10–19 years old. The most vulnerable population is girls, often girls who are performing well in school and have loving families and friends. However, both sexes and every part of society are at risk – teens from wealthy or poor families, from cities or rural areas, college-bound or not.

How did I get here?

The pros who study adolescents have a few answers. They tell us that today's teens:

- ☛ Have struggled through a pandemic, seeing livelihoods lost as well as lives. They've been isolated from friends and often family members, found their social lives reduced to six feet apart wearing a mask, struggled to engage with school online, and feared for both the long-term health and economic effects of COVID-19. And while pandemics are, thankfully, very rare, they know that *epidemics* (diseases that sweep through a region rather than across the world) continue to be a looming threat.
- ☛ May experience conflicts with parents – who sometimes have alcohol or drug problems – bullying at school, sexual aggression, moving to a new city or new country, understanding cultural differences, hearing or seeing reports of disturbing events. All of these issues of living in our modern, hyper-connected world can especially plague teens.

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy...” Really?

- ☛ Understand that we are facing a global environment crisis. They see videos of the Amazon rain forest ablaze, oil spills polluting oceans and shores, and mountains of plastic swirling through the seas. They’ve heard about or lived through wildfires, extreme storms, rising temperatures, and the extinction of plant and animal species. Sometimes the world looks scary.
- ☛ Have seen social/political/human rights movements change their societies, for better or for worse. The rise of the Black Lives Matter and other human rights movements, struggles of refugees and displaced peoples, and polarized political opinions can create real hope but also a challenging sense of uncertainty.

But, huge as these issues are, perhaps the major contributor to the wave of depressed and anxious teens is – you guessed it – social media. Today’s young people hit puberty at the same time social media hit society. They rarely get and seldom take a break from this constant stimulus. That’s exhausting.

Most teens are overexposed, which is wearing them out physically, mentally, and emotionally. Their relationships are 24/7 as they text, chat, and send videos to friends from before breakfast until they fall asleep – often with phones tucked next to their pillows. They do homework on one screen with another nearby streaming a TV show. They play games on their phones at the same time they watch TV. They eat dinner, ride in a car, and walk down the sidewalk while looking at small screens. The stimulation is constant. Despite the benefits of social media – keeping in touch with friends! creating a sense of belonging! giving people a voice to speak out! self-expression! – it often throws life out of balance. This excessive techno-focus erodes the ability to be still inside, to wonder, think, analyze, and imagine.

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Anxiety is normal. All of us worry at least a little. But anxiety disorders are more than just “a little” worry. For people with these disorders, the worry doesn’t go away after a few days or weeks and can be uncontrollable. Anxious teens may have trouble with concentration, irritability, and muscle tension. They may have difficulty falling and staying asleep and may withdraw from family and friends. Sometimes an anxious person will speak up about their anxiety; sometimes they will try to hide it.

Depression is common and can be serious. A depressed mood can take away your pleasure in life. The symptoms of depression may leave you sad or irritable most of the time. You may eat or sleep too much or too little and may not be able to concentrate. Often depressed teens feel hopeless.

Everybody gets a bit anxious and depressed from time to time. Most teens sometimes worry about their lives or feel low for many reasons. However, if that anxiety or depression lasts for more than a couple of weeks, take another look at what’s going on. Are you also having problems with energy, concentration, sleeping, or eating? Are you unable to shake doubts about your abilities, appearance, or personality?

If so, please get help. Tell your parents, a counselor, or a good friend.

Be kind to yourself. You’re not alone. Talking to a trusted friend or counselor can ease your mind and heart.

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy...” Really?

It’s a panic attack. Breathe.

At times, anxiety spikes. You can be sitting around eating dinner, in a good mood, and suddenly remember that your mid-term exams are coming up sooner than you realized. Or your piano recital. Or swim competition. Whatever.

Pound goes the heart. You can’t quite seem to breathe. Maybe your stomach is churning like crazy. Maybe you’re getting dizzy. You’re really afraid.

This is a panic attack.

Breathe. Literally. Take a long breath in and blow it slowly out. Feel the air enter your nose, go down your throat, and fill your stomach. Then push it gently back up and out. Sloooooowly. Do it again and again.

Get someone to help if you want, or you can help yourself. Maybe you need to lie alone in a room and breathe deeply. Maybe you need someone to hold your hand and speak gently or get a cold cloth for your head. Or a cup of tea. Or a bowl of ice cream. Or all of these.

Having someone who will help in these ways is wonderful but not always possible. So lie down. Take more deep breaths. Get yourself comfortable. Curl up if you want. Put on soft music, and then when you feel better, get up for that tea or ice cream or cold cloth. Turn on a fan or burrow under blankets.

Doesn’t that feel good? Focus on it. Feel the blanket laying on your shoulders, the warmth of the teacup against your fingers, or the softness of the pillow under your head. ***When you concentrate on what feels good, bad feelings automatically decrease.*** Fortunately, that’s the way the brain works.

To decrease worry, shift your attention to your body. Feel your feet inside your socks, the rub of your shirt on your back, the weight of your fingers. The mind doesn’t seem built to think about these things AND to worry. What a relief.

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Then, decide which of your relatives or friends you can reach out to.

What would you like to tell people?

Here's what a few teens have said:

“Please don't tell me I'm not doing anything with my life. I need someone to be there for me. I need someone to tell me I'm doing everything I can to heal. Please tell me you're proud of me.”

“Thank you for putting up with my roller coaster. Know that I love you very much, even at my worst moments.”

“I appreciate your wisdom, but I also have to find my own way.”

“Don't be ashamed of me. I do the best I can.”

What would *you* like to say? Can you say it? Or write it?



“Don’t Worry, Be Happy....” Really?

How can your parents help?

You know this, but here’s a reminder: Your parents love you more than anyone else does. That’s beautiful. And valuable. They want to help. They may not know how, but they want to.

Use that help.

Okay, parents, this list is for you.

1. Talk about the real stuff. Go beyond dentist appointments, rides to school, grades, and chores. Instead of “How did school go today?” [You know the answer already: “Fine.”], try “What was the best part of your day?” Or, “What are you studying in history?” Maybe, “How are you getting along with your friends these days?” Listen. Find out how their life is going and what their dreams are.
2. Pay attention, but don’t smother them. Give them a chance to grow up and separate from you, but also watch for changes in the way they behave. If you’re worried, say so. Show interest in how they feel and think without being judgmental or critical. Be honest and positive. There is always something your teen is doing well. There is always something to be proud of. Share authentic compliments with your teen.
3. Resist getting angry. If your teen is hiding something or getting into trouble, trade anger for information. Find out what’s going on. You can say directly, “It looks like you’re having trouble. I’m here to help. Tell me what’s happening with you.”

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4. Don't put off getting help. Talk to a school counselor, therapist, or doctor. It's better to get help early rather than wait until trouble boils over.
5. Involve the whole family. When your teen is in crisis, many times it's not enough to focus only on the child – you may have to change the ways in which the entire family interacts. Perhaps something about the home or other situations is causing stress for your child. Be open to that possibility and to getting family or marriage counseling if needed.

You can thank Fadi Haddad, a psychiatrist and co-author of *Helping Kids in Crisis*, for this list (even though your teen isn't a 'kid' anymore).

Help is at hand.

You don't have to constantly feel worried or sad. Anxiety and depression are treatable and common. Too often, people don't want to admit they have problems, and they put off getting help. These things are nothing to be ashamed of. Like frequent headaches or stomach pains, they simply *are*. Suffering from anxiety and depression *does not* make you less whole than people who don't (currently) struggle with them.

So be kind to yourself. There's only one of you in the whole, big world. Treat that person well.



7

Drugs, Alcohol, and Nicotine

Maybe you haven't ever smoked weed and don't want to. Maybe you take a few tokes at a party. Perhaps you've never drunk alcohol or just don't like it. Maybe you like to drink socially, at dinner or hanging with friends.

Perhaps you know someone who depends on Ritalin to get through exams. Xanax to calm their nerves. Drugs to make them feel brilliant and special. Laughing gas to feel kinda crazy.

Maybe every one of these things – and the many other ways to alter the chemistry of your brain – scare the living daylights outta you. How can a teen decide how to act in a world full of possibilities that may be all around you but are dangerous, illegal, or unhealthy?

Remember, you always have a **choice** in what you do. You can say no, make a different decision, party in another way. Yep, peer pressure doesn't make that easy, but you do have a choice.

Maybe you wonder if you can have fun without all the damage. You hear someone brag about tripping on mushrooms, or your parents have a prescription to

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calm their nerves. They *seem* fine. You wonder what the big deal is, as long as no one gets addicted.

We may think we're not going to get addicted, but we do know that every addict started with casual or occasional use.

Let's not talk about full-blown addiction here, because that's a whole book, a life unraveled, time in rehab, families undone, health and happiness shattered, at least for a while. Let's talk instead about believing drugs or alcohol help you manage your life. If you regularly drink alcohol, smoke, vape, or use drugs recreationally, there's a pretty good (bad?) chance that you will at least become dependent on them.

Why? What's up with that?

It's because your brain's still developing. If there's ever a good time to mess with your brain, before your mid-20s isn't it. (See the chapter "Beginning with the Teen Brain.")



Drugs, Alcohol, and Nicotine

For example, teens who smoke weed regularly (at least once a week) are much more likely to develop dependency than people who start as adults. Irritability, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, lack of appetite, restlessness, and mood swings are signs of this dependency.

Plus, when anyone – teen or not – gets stoned, they're a dangerous driver. Marijuana screws up a driver's reaction time, coordination, and judgment. You've heard,

If your family has a history of addiction, your chances of becoming addicted increase.

“Don't drink and drive.”

Add

“Don't drive high.”

And don't ever get in a car if you suspect the driver's high.

Sometimes weed is advertised and sold – legally, in some places – as a 'natural' or 'organic' plant. Sounds harmless, even good for you. But no one thinks that smoking 'organic' tobacco is healthy! Or walking through 'natural' poison oak! Don't let these easy labels fool you. Weed is far from harmless, and regular users can become dependent on it.

With alcohol use, one in ten teens who start drinking at age 17 or 18 develop dependence. Forty percent – that's almost half – of teens who start drinking before 15 get addicted later in life. They become alcoholics. Their developing brains get hammered at exactly the wrong time of life. Plus, teens who consume alcohol are 50 times more likely to use cocaine than teens who don't.

Honestly, there's no upside with drugs or alcohol. Realistically, though, people around you use them. Yes, you want to fit in, relax, have fun. Normal stuff. But think about the risks. Actions have consequences. Don't say yes when getting high goes against your values.

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But how do you say no without it being a big deal? Maybe these tips will help:

- ☛ If you carry around a cup/glass/bottle full of what you *want* to drink, fewer people will offer you booze. Wandering a party with a glass full of soda or mineral water might be just the ticket.
- ☛ When you turn down alcohol or drugs, be confident and brief. Don't try to justify yourself, don't preach, don't rattle on. "Nah, man, I'm good." "No, thanks. What do you think of this music?"
- ☛ If you're pressed for more explanation, continue to be stingy with words. You'll feel more in control. A conversation could go like this:
 - "So why don't you drink?"
 - "I just don't like to." (shoulder shrug)
 - OR "I don't like the taste." (another topic change)Occasionally, someone might get in your face, maybe saying, "How do you know you don't like smoking weed (or *whatever*) if you haven't tried it?"

First, recognize this as an aggressive question. That person is probably trying to push you around, at least a little. You don't have to answer every question you're asked. You may want to just walk away.

But if you do choose to respond, you might need some internal toughness. (Note: *Tough* doesn't have to be *mean*. Speak calmly.) Perhaps this would work (firm + casual = more effective):
 - "I don't have to try everything in the world to know what I don't want."
 - OR "It goes against my values. I don't need to explain myself to you."
- ☛ Be firm *inside yourself* about what you really want. Choosing not to get high or stoned is a solid decision. Hold onto it.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Nicotine

- ☉ Remember that your real friends will support you, often even agree with you. You can be honest, but there's still no need to lecture or moralize. If someone pushes you to do something you're not comfortable with, s/he is not your friend. Friends respect boundaries.

Smoking by any other name

Lighting up. Vaping. Juuling. By any name, it's dangerous. And addicting.

You know the biggest problems – the cancers (almost anywhere in your body), heart disease, strokes. Maybe you've heard about the reduced fertility in men, ruined teeth, damaged vision, risk of diabetes. And that's just the beginning of what could be a loonngg list.

Perhaps you've heard that vaping is less harmful than smoking cigarettes. Less addictive. And maybe you think it's more hip, more fun.

Don't be fooled by the less harmful/addictive argument.

All brands of e-cigarettes carry plenty of nicotine and health risks in those vapors, flavored or not. A Google search of all the risks could take you into old age. You could find out facts like this: one Juul pod has about the same amount of nicotine as a whole pack of cigarettes! And the "more hip, more fun" part? Plenty of teens disagree.

Really, who wants to become dependent on something that's so harmful?

Addiction and dependence aren't the only issues. Not by a long shot.

Ever heard of *stunted emotional growth*? Perhaps you know someone who's really immature for their age. Who's clueless about how

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to act in social situations and doesn't seem to know or care about other people's feelings. You wish they'd just grow up. And chances are they will.

Unless they start regularly using drugs or alcohol. Then their odds of growing up emotionally go way down.

Do you ever feel uncomfortable with groups of other teens? Like everyone else is hanging out with someone cool or talking about something interesting and you don't belong? (Almost everyone feels this sometimes!) And then did you or maybe someone you know decide that drugs or alcohol would help you relax and have fun?

That happens a lot, but it has a huge downside.

Because drinking and drugging your way through an awkward social situation **stunts your emotional growth**. If you lean on these things to help you out, you won't develop the skills to help yourself. It's like breaking your arm and keeping it in a sling forever. If you don't do the hard work of eventually going without the sling, exercising gently, getting range of motion back, you'll be stuck with an arm that doesn't work.

You want to develop emotional maturity. You want to be able to relax, make conversation, understand what people feel. To control your temper. To value yourself and have realistic expectations of other people.

All of these things are harder to figure out, harder to be, if you use drugs or alcohol. Emotionally immature people feel helpless and especially struggle when times get tough. In what can become a terrible cycle, they often drink and drug themselves more in an effort to feel better or forget.

And then things can get much, much worse. The physical effects vary, but none of them are good. Heart trouble. Liver damage. Hallucinations. Depression. Fatigue. Acne. Nose bleeds. Rotten teeth. Anxiety. Confusion. Trouble talking. Just for starters.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Nicotine

What can you do/feel/think/believe that will help you make choices that don't include drugs and alcohol?

A few possibilities –

- ☉ **DO** things that make you happy and healthy. Lots of sports teams, dance or martial arts studios, and school clubs require members to stay completely away from intoxicants. They want teens at the top of their game. Maybe you're training to run a 10K or spending a lot of time studying ancient history. Do something that lights an internal fire.
- ☉ **FEEL** that you are connected to people, even a handful, who care about you and who want you to be happy. And you wish the same for them. They have your back; you have theirs. You're in this thing called 'life' together, supporting each other.
- ☉ **THINK** positively. Be curious. Focus on your strengths. Find things you like about yourself and give them extra attention. You'll find that negative thoughts fall away when you're not paying attention to them.
- ☉ **BELIEVE** in yourself and your ability to shape a joyful life. All that you do, feel, and think come together to create a unique you. Always be positive about yourself.

With your body, heart, mind, and spirit connected, make smart choices. Take care of your friends and yourself. You matter. A lot.



Grief

Grief is not a disorder, a disease, or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.

Rabbi Earl Grollman

Oh, good – you’re here. You’re reading this. I hope it helps.

Maybe someone you’ve cared about has died. Maybe your pet is gone. Maybe your best friend has moved away. Or you’re grieving for another reason. For sure, grief will happen in your life.

But you already know that.

You know that everything that lives must also die, that friends go away, that life can be hard.

So let’s talk about how we deal with death, grief, and the mourning that naturally follows losing who or what we love. If this doesn’t apply to you right now, knowing how to support grieving friends is important.

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It will help to understand three essential things:

1. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

You don't have to respond to death or loss the way you've seen others respond. And you don't have to respond differently, either.

You may not be able to say what you're feeling, or you may feel several emotions at once. Yes, you might be both sad and angry. Or feel guilty and relieved, or lonely and scared. Or all of these.

2. Grieving and mourning are different but they go together. Grieving is what you think and feel on the inside when you experience loss. Mourning is expressing your grief.

Grief may feel like sadness, anger, regret, relief, numbness, or all of these things tumbled together. You may feel like you have a hole in your chest or an ache in your gut or you can't concentrate on anything.

Mourning is letting your grief out. Crying, talking, writing, running, and many other activities are ways of mourning.

While there is no right or wrong way to mourn, there are helpful and unhelpful ways.

3. Losing someone hurts and you need time to heal. To heal your grief, you must mourn. Talking about your thoughts and feelings really helps. You don't have to talk when you don't want to. You don't have to tell everything at once, but eventually, you need to connect. Find someone you trust, someone who will listen.

Grief

Sometimes grieving teens are told to “be strong,” “move on,” or “get over it.” You can do all of that, but first you need to grieve thoroughly.

Perhaps your friends seem to ignore the fact that you’ve just lost someone you love. They don’t know what to say, so they don’t say anything. Adults might do this, too. They’re afraid that talking will remind you of the death or the loss.

But you don’t need reminding; you haven’t forgotten.

Find someone who will support you, someone who won’t judge how you feel. Tell them what you want to tell – who or what you’ve lost, what your connection was, the different things you’re feeling, or that you can’t seem to feel a thing. What you’re worried about. Who you’re worried about.

It’s okay to feel all these things. And you won’t feel them forever.

What does grief look like?

It looks like a book full of pictures of faces, with different expressions on each page. You flip the pages, and the faces fan past you. You can be many of those expressions, even at the same time. Does grief make you laugh? Are you grieving deeply but people think it’s strange you haven’t cried? Or do you find yourself crying constantly? Are you the face that’s eating all the time? Or the one that refuses to eat at all? The face that looks numb, or the one shouting in anger?

Grief has a different face for each person, and different faces for the same person. You don’t have to fit a mold.

Let yourself mourn in your own way. Give yourself permission to let your grief look how it looks.

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What do you wish people would understand?

- ☉ Just because you're not crying doesn't mean you're not grieving.
- ☉ Even when you're having fun, the memory of your loss can be with you.
- ☉ Holidays are hard.
- ☉ You need to take naps. Grief can be exhausting.
- ☉ You're afraid you'll forget the face and voice of the one who died.

What else do you wish people would understand? Write it down. Talk it out. Pretty much everyone has flunked mind reading, and we're usually not so good at reading emotions, either. But if your friends and family want to help, tell them how they can do that.

When a parent dies...

The death of a parent can seem to shatter the world.

The grief that comes with such a death also comes with unique questions. Teens need to be able to ask their questions, even if there aren't complete answers yet.

Please know that you are not unusual or selfish if, in the middle of great pain, you want to know:

What happens if my other parent dies, too? What will happen to me? What will happen to my family? Do we have enough money? Can I keep going to the same school?

Grief can make it hard to catch your breath. Especially when a parent dies. Focus on mourning, on doing things to make yourself feel better. Ask these questions if you need to, and ask to have honest answers.

Grief

Remember that everyone who loves you is grieving for you, too. They want to help. Let them. They want to listen, even if they don't know what to say. Your staying silent doesn't relieve their worry. As you open up, both you and the people you talk to may find your hearts become lighter.

Things that help/things that don't

Allow me to share a story. Yesterday I walked down dingy stairs to a church basement full of foldout tables covered with knives and cutting boards. In a separate room, bags of basil, bowls of tomatoes, heaps of peppers and carrots, and piles of potatoes were tumbling over the counters and into the sinks. A young man in a baggy T-shirt was scraping the grill of an old stove. People of all ages were chatting amiably while they washed veggies. My family and I were ready to chop, wash, cook, or clean along with them.

We had come to mourn.

And we were happy about that.

So began our work with the Burrito Brigade, a group that makes vegan burritos for the homeless. This was our way of mourning.

Several years ago, a member of our family killed himself. Following the advice of the wisest person I know, we made up our minds to “be positive” and mourn him in positive ways. So every year around his birthday, we give a little of our time as a family to help someone else.

This year, we chopped potatoes, stripped kale, and diced tomatoes. As we worked together, we told old family stories, again.

And then we took ourselves out to lunch and toasted the man we all loved who is gone. We spoke his name with affection.

Everyone went home feeling better.

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How to help yourself

Do something you feel good about. Dedicate the activity to the person you lost. Laugh with friends. Keep hydrated – drink lots of water. Keep a journal. Take naps. Play music. Get a pen pal. Make a memory book. Understand that healing comes a little bit at a time.

You can use your body to help. Run or dance or kick a ball or pound a pillow. Exercise releases feel-good chemicals and increases body temperature, which has calming effects.

Or maybe paint a picture. Whether it's drawing, singing, spoken word, pounding a drum set, working with clay, or something else, creativity feels good. And feeling good is a much-needed break from sorrow.

What doesn't help you

Recreational drugs, alcohol, never sharing feelings, techno-escaping – these things seal in the grief. They actually keep you from mourning. Remember – to heal grief, you must first mourn.

You can mourn in positive ways. Grief can help you become a more understanding, compassionate person. None of us can avoid grief; however, all of us can experience it and become deeper, better human beings.

Grieving doesn't make you imperfect. It makes you human.

Sarah Dessen



Happiness

The first step toward living a happy life is to treat every other human with kindness. There are several steps after that, but I can't remember them right now.

The Dalai Lama

We could all use a recipe for how to be happy. Mix this and this, stir with that, bake for 30 minutes. If some chef could come up with a “happiness” entrée, serve it over rice, charge big bucks, we’d line up to pay and eat. What a great thing to do – walk into a restaurant with your friends, maybe get a table with a view, and order up a big dish of happiness for everyone. Share the bill, add a generous tip, and stroll out smiling.

Okay, enough fantasizing.

How can we be happy, really?

Isn't the world so messed up that no one can ever be happy? How can anybody be lighthearted when children are dying from hunger, the polar ice caps are melting, and bombs are going off in market places? Plus a thousand other terrible social problems. Add in a dozen personal issues, and being happy starts to look impossible.

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But it's not. It's actually very, very possible.

And believe it or not, there is kind of a recipe for happiness. But you have to gather the ingredients and do the cooking. Just **reading** a recipe isn't enough. If you want to enjoy tikka masala, pizza, burgers, or any other food, you have to do way more than read about them. Same with happiness.

And don't be shy about asking for help from an experienced happiness cook. Parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, especially the cheerful ones, may surprise you with excellent tips for whipping up a batch of happiness.

Before you begin making a mess in the happiness kitchen, remember this: It's okay to have an "off" day sometimes. Not every day is sunny. Occasional sadness is natural, maybe even important. It can teach us to understand how others feel and help us become more emotionally mature.



So here's one recipe. No charge. I'd love for you to cook it up and then give it a review. Feel free to experiment. You can leave out a few things or stir in some others. (Chocolate may be a crucial addition!!) Experience has shown that some basic elements are required. Like sugar and flour in a cake recipe, friendship, kindness, and gratitude seem to be essential for making happiness.

A Recipe for Happiness

This recipe feeds you first and then as many people as you want. Use a lot of the following! The more you have of each ingredient, the better the recipe turns out. Nobody cares which ingredient you start with. Just start.

Mix:

- ☼ Acceptance of yourself. Be sure to use the organic variety – the kind of acceptance that comes without comparisons between you and anyone else.
- ☼ Understanding what you can control and what you can't.
- ☼ Gratitude, the best sweetener.
- ☼ Good friends. Be one to get one.
- ☼ Kindness – always in style.
- ☼ Exercise – sports, dance, yoga, a walk, whatever. Move it.
- ☼ Help someone. Be a peer mentor, visit an old person, volunteer at a kids' camp, clean your local beach or park, work at a free kitchen, or ...
- ☼ Music! Make it yourself, download it, go to a concert, check out a flash mob, plug in your headphones, join the school choir, form a band.
- ☼ Perspective. Will something that bothers you now really matter in five years? Five months? Five days?

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- ☼ Do something you enjoy. You can double up on this with the exercise or music ingredients or add your own flair.
- ☼ Spend time in nature. Sit by a river, walk through a garden, hike through a forest, dive into a lake. Go outside at night and find the moon. Take a picnic to the top of a hill at sunset. By yourself or with friends, when you're out in nature, you usually won't feel lonely. Alone, maybe, but lonely – probably not.

With this recipe, you're going to get the best of both worlds – some instant increase in happiness, some increase that shows up over time. If you're really wanting to help yourself feel better *now*, you might heap some of the following on top of what you're cooking:

- ☼ Write in a journal.
- ☼ Watch a funny YouTube video. (Try a laughing baby post. You can ask for a refund on the price of this book if it doesn't make you smile. Oh, wait – the book's free online. . . .)
- ☼ Organize your notebook! Weird, right? But it can feel *so* productive.
- ☼ Cook. Follow a recipe or create something original. Feed friends or sit down to a formal feast all by yourself. Eat on a blanket outside or set your table as if royalty were coming to dine. It's fun!
- ☼ Pet an animal. There's a reason they're called *pets*.

Happiness

This recipe has a bit of magic in it: Eat as much of this as you want – you'll never be too full. Share your cooking with friends, family, and strangers. You can **create** lightheartedness, wellbeing, and contentment. Awesome thought.

The dish you bake is designed to make long-term **happiness** rather than short-term **pleasure**. Those two things are way different. Anyone who's ever gone on an ice cream binge can tell you that, and the same principle applies in more complex situations. What do you **really** want?

Connections are often the basis of lasting happiness. You want to connect with yourself – your spirit, emotions, intellect – your friends, and your family. You may want connections with people, with animals, or with the natural world. Connections are at the core of happiness.





10

Hipster, Jock, Nerd, Brainiac, or None of the Above?

Fitting into the social scene in high school. . . . Sounds like risky business. How do you even start?

Easy answer: Be comfortable with yourself.

Hard answer: Be comfortable with yourself.

Easy to say, hard to live by. So let's talk.

Maybe you're just starting high school or you're a transfer student. Or perhaps it's a new year and you want a fresh start. You want good friends and at least decent grades. You want to feel comfortable, have a fun life, explore new things.

A big hurdle: The tyranny of cool – the belief that cool rules. And the pressure teens have to please that ruler.

Okay, maybe you're one of the few – very few – people who are naturally cool. You wear the right clothes or

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look good in your school uniform. You're good at sports or a great student or the star of the drama department. You're funny and easy with other kids. You've got the latest tech devices. Whatever's cool at your school, you have it. You may be screaming inside, but it doesn't show.

Odds are, though, that you're like most of the teens around you – you're a little tense, a little unsure, average at most things and good at a few. You're funny and relaxed sometimes, but not nearly as often as you'd like to be. You want to meet new people but don't know how. Sometimes you hide behind your phone and pretend you don't care that you're sitting alone.

So how do you start fitting in?

First, let's change the way we talk. That can help us change the way we think.

Forget “fitting in.”

That implies you're going to change yourself to be like others. Let's think instead of “belonging.” Belonging is about finding your tribe, your group, your buddies who like you the way you are. Or maybe just a couple of good friends. You share interests – football, chess, gaming, hip hop, choir, cricket. You don't have to change yourself or fake it to belong. You probably don't share all of the same interests, but that's okay, too. These are your peeps, and you can be natural with them. Even if you make mistakes or say dumb things occasionally, they might tease you, but it's no big deal.

“Fitting in” is having to squeeze your foot into too-small shoes. Pretending you're interested when you don't give a rip. Snickering at jokes you don't think are funny. Criticizing people who aren't part of the clique. Not talking about things *you* enjoy (stamp collecting! birdwatching! knitting!) because no one else talks about them. Hiding

Hipster, Jock, Nerd, Brainiac, or None of the Above?

your interest in school or pretending you're more interested than you really are. Going along to get along, even when you know better.

Sounds awful, doesn't it?

How much more fun – how much **cooler** – to be natural, authentic. Honest about what you know and don't know, not trying to impress anyone but also not afraid to share your talents.

This might require courage. But it'll feel a ton better than trying desperately to fit in.

Sometimes it takes work to find people you really like to hang with. That work can come in the form of pushing yourself to start conversations, walking into club meetings where you may not know anyone, risking being ignored occasionally. You can handle it. But how?

Some practical tips

Rather than talking about yourself, ask questions about the other person. Nothing wrong with keeping it simple: *What did you think of that math test today? Have you seen the new Star Wars movie?* Nod or say hi to people in the corridors. Be friendly and polite – hold doors for someone with their hands full, help them pick up dropped books. Being friendly and courteous comes out light years ahead of cool. Maybe not right away, but eventually and always.

Don't disappear in class. Speak up sometimes. You don't have to sit in the front row and wag your hand constantly, but don't just act like a coat rack, either. It can be helpful to write down a possible comment or question when you're doing homework. No need to put big pressure on yourself, but be kinda ready if the chance comes up to talk. And if it doesn't – well, there's always another school day.

Joining a club or playing a sport is also a great way to meet potential friends – friends you already have something in common with. Sometimes it's good to try something new. Who knows? Your

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body's changing – you're becoming more coordinated, taller, stronger – and maybe you're ready for a new sport.

Remember – this is about doing what *you* want – not trying to be who *they* like.



That's powerful stuff.

Maybe you're naturally hip, athletic, techy, and/or smart. Maybe music is your thing. Nice – you've got a groove.

Or maybe you're "none of the above" – no particular groove at all. That can work, too.

Being average is – drum roll here – a pretty average thing to be. It has advantages. "Average" or "basic" means you're fairly good at different things, maybe not great at any of them. You might be an

Hipster, Jock, Nerd, Brainiac, or None of the Above?

average hockey player. Every team needs 'em, and you won't have the same pressure as the team star.

You might be an average dancer – not usually in the front row on stage, but one of the many in the middle. You could still have all the fun and friendship that comes with being on a team/in an ensemble/part of a troupe.

You could look about average or make average grades.

Can you be fine with this?

Because what you really want is to *be happy*, right? You can specialize in other things – being funny or kind or telling great stories. Being the one who organizes movie nights or makes killer jalebis. If you don't play sports, maybe you help manage the team. If nothing on Earth could get you to dance and sing in front of an audience, work the sound and light boards, or paint the set. If you're not interested in any of the clubs at your school, start a new one.

One year at a school, several students started a "Random Acts of Kindness" club built around doing nice things for other people. They cleaned up around campus, made cupcakes to give away, spent a Saturday afternoon at a home for seniors. The club became immensely popular and was filmed by the local TV news station. The students involved wanted to do something outside the norm. They had an original idea and ran with it.

You don't have to fit into somebody else's box either.

The high school social scene can actually be fun – a chance to chill and meet new people. But you have to be willing to defy King Cool sometimes. Drop the idea of pleasing the tyrant.

Relax. Be comfortable with yourself. You got this.

The reward for conformity was that everyone liked you except yourself.

Rita Mae Brown

Being a Teenager Today

To see how one diverse group of teens found music in common, check out a great video on YouTube:

One Voice: “America’s Got Talent 2016 Audition – One Voice 12 Member Acapella Group Powerful Vocals” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n49t-6GaRYA>



11

Hit Pause

The time has come to think
more wisely, hasn't it?

The Dalai Lama

Ping! Your phone reminds you that an appointment is coming up.

Buzzzz. Time to change classes.

10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Countdown to midnight on New Year's Eve!

It's crazy how much time we spend paying attention to **time**. "What time is it?" has got to be one of the most common questions in the world.

We all have exactly the same amount of time every day. What do we do with the 24 hours we each get between sunrises? And why does that matter?

Okay, the obvious. We spend most of our time sleeping, eating, and going to school or work. Everybody has to brush their teeth, shower, get dressed. Often do homework, practice sports, play music – you get the picture. It's the other time we're talking about here, the hours you still have left over. Maybe you don't have very many extra hours; maybe you'd like a lot more free time. But you do have **some** unscheduled time.

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What do you do with it?

More and more, the answer is that you spend it on a screen. In fact, the average teenager reportedly spends *nine hours* a day on a laptop, smartphone, or tablet, or in front of a TV.



How does anyone pull nine hours out of an average day to spend with media technology? Often, you multi-task. You watch a video while brushing your teeth, turn up the music when you're in the shower, video chat with a friend while you're doing the dishes, watch television while doing your homework, text when you're eating dinner, and post photos online doing just about everything. Occasionally you kick back and do one thing at a time, like play a video game. But mostly you have at least two things going at once.

And many of you don't think this makes any difference in the quality of your life, your work, or your ability to learn. You think following one football game on your phone when you're watching

Hit Pause

another on TV is just fine. You defend the idea that listening to music at the same time you're writing an essay is actually helpful. (*Okay – one way you're right here. Listening to music that doesn't have lyrics works. Jazz, classical, instrumental. But writing words and listening to words at the same time – nope. Not how the brain works best.*)

Evidence clearly contradicts the belief that there's no problem with multi-tasking, that it's a good way to get lots of things done. "Evidence clearly contradicts" is a polite way to say that idea is wrong. The brain is negatively affected. So is everyone else's brain when they multi-task – your parents, your teachers, your doctor. Our brains work best when we give our attention to one thing, at a time.

Spending a lot of time multi-tasking on tech devices is related to a reduced ability to focus on what really matters. In other words, people who spend a lot of time with their attention bouncing from one device to another can't concentrate as well as others, *even when the devices are turned off.*

Fractured concentration is a huge loss.

You need concentration to follow a recipe, take exams, score a goal, write a song, and do just about anything successfully. Not concentrating reduces our pleasure in everything as well as diminishes our ability to understand, create, and perform.

Stepping back from social media is the newest movement among teens! Tired of misleading postings and competition for 'likes,' some teens are taking a long break. Flip phone, anyone?

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Empathy –
understanding
and sharing
another per-
son's feelings.

Don't you love doing something you enjoy and realizing that time has just whizzed by? Wow, where did that hour go? That's because you were *focused*.

Here's another thing about spending hours every day on digital media: Those hours are too often a substitute for deeper communication. The kind where you look in a person's eyes, speak to them personally. Doing so helps us develop *empathy*.

Empathy, kindness, and compassion arise more easily face-to-face than online.

Think about it: Have you ever written anything in a text or on social media that you'd never say to someone's face? Or seen where people make mean comments online just because they can get away with doing that? *Be nice* is advice we forget too easily when we're pounding a keyboard.

No one's saying to ditch your phones or trash your TV. Turn 'em off sometimes, yes, especially for the first and last hour of the day. You'll start more focused and end more peacefully. Try it for an hour, then maybe two. The Earth kept twirling around, didn't it? We live in a digital world, but we have to live in it wisely. We have to be smarter than our phones.

Who's in control here? If the answer is "our devices," we need to change course. Give our brains a chance to really focus and our hearts a chance to connect.



12

Is There Anything Good to Eat?

Eat [real] food. Not too much. Mostly plants.

Michael Pollan

Parathas oozing melted butter and veggies, spiced with chili. A cold cardamom lassi or caramel macchiato. Pizza. Chips and guacamole. Apples and peanut butter. Bright paneer masala with sweet tomatoes and fenugreek.

Food! Don't you love it?

After school, what's the first thing you want to do? Eat! After any sport or exercise, during a movie, while visiting with friends, what do you want to do? Eat! Enjoying the taste and energy of food is a central part of being human, especially being a **teen** human. The fact that you're growing quickly is no news flash to you or your parents, who foot the bill for your appetite. Your changing body and rapid metabolism give you plenty of good reasons to open the fridge or forage through the cupboards.

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Bring out your inner chef! Whip up a mango lassi!

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt, either dairy- or coconut-based

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

1 cup fresh, ripe mango pulp

Sugar to taste

Toss everything into a blender.

Add a few ice cubes if you want a different texture.

Maybe sprinkle in a little cinnamon or cardamom?



What kind of foods are you looking for? What satisfies you? Probably different things on different days. But generally speaking, what do you reach for? Sweets? Fried foods? Fresh fruit? Bread and cheese? Anything vegetarian? Only vegan foods?

Naturally, you want food to taste good. No question about that! But you also want other things. Energy. Feeling good, not just full. The connections with friends and family that are often made over food. A healthy planet, one whose people and animals aren't being harmed by what you choose to eat.

So it makes sense to think about what goes in your mouth. Does it leave you feeling good in every way?

You know that fresh foods are better for you than processed foods. If you read the label of ingredients on a package (Yes! Do that!) and don't recognize most of the words, put the darn thing back on the shelf. Preservatives and sugars are really tough on your body. Same for palm oil and food coloring and artificial sweeteners. If you see that a package has maltodextrin, high-fructose corn syrup,

Is There Anything Good to Eat?

saccharin, or aspartame, do yourself a favor and choose something else. Some on-line research will quickly show you that these ingredients can lead to a variety of health problems. Ironically, artificial sweeteners can even lead to weight gain! Our taste buds get used to their intense sweetness, making fruits and vegetables less appealing.

There are *plenty* of great foods that don't have risky additives. You'll soon learn what brands you want to reach for. Eat to have a healthy body, to feel good, both now and in the future.

**Here's a not-news flash –
you're getting older all the time.**

What you eat today is connected to how your body will feel tomorrow and long after that. Sugar and fried foods especially have effects that build up in your blood and cells. One of the many awful effects of overeating either sugary or fried foods is diabetes. This is a disease you definitely do not want to get. It can lead to blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, and neuropathy (numbness and tingling in hands, feet, arms, and legs – even to the extent of requiring amputation). It's becoming an epidemic because of people's food habits, but *you* don't need to be part of that.

The good news is that the most common type of diabetes is completely preventable! Move away from fried and sugary foods to improve the way you feel now and boost your health in years to come.

What about a healthy planet?

How does your eating help or harm our Earth? This question is especially important to your generation. Young people are really concerned about the world they're inheriting.

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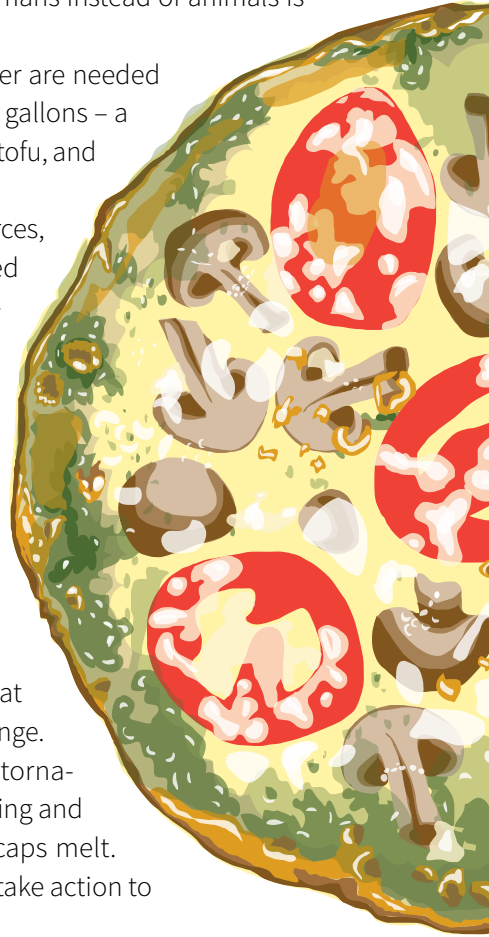
There's lots of evidence that being vegetarian or vegan is the single most important thing anyone can do to help the environment. More than giving up your car, more than recycling or taking short showers. Growing food directly for humans instead of animals is a much better use of land and water.

For example, 2,500 gallons of water are needed to make a pound of beef, but only 250 gallons – a tenth of that – is needed for a pound of tofu, and just 25 gallons for a pound of wheat.

In addition to gulping water resources, enormous amounts of land are used to grow food for animals or to shelter them. One of the major reasons the planet's rain forests are being cut down is for animal agriculture. Once, these forests covered 14% of the world's surface; by 2015, that was more than halved to 6%. The rapid destruction of forests on a grand scale contributes to global climate change.

You know about the problems that come with human-induced climate change. Larger, more violent hurricanes and tornadoes; extremes of heat and cold; flooding and fires; rising water levels as polar ice caps melt. You know that we all urgently need to take action to help Mother Earth.

You often hear that everyone needs to use bus and rail more in order to reduce the CO₂ and other harmful emissions of private automobiles. But you seldom hear that all the planes, trains, trucks, cars, buses, and boats in the world *combined* create fewer greenhouse



Is There Anything Good to Eat?

gases (13%) than raising, feeding, and transporting livestock for food. Livestock activities create an estimated **18%** of all greenhouse gases.

Vegetarianism is also a compassionate choice. Animals don't need to live miserable lives in crowded cages or barns and die often-painful deaths in order for you and me to be healthy.

India has more vegetarians than any other nation. However, as influences from the US and Europe seep into Indian culture, there is increased pressure to eat meat. Interestingly enough, the reverse is often true in the West. Going vegan is becoming more and more popular among Western young people as they become aware of the cruelty and environmental destruction of the animal industry and the health benefits of a plant-based diet.

Millions and millions of people are “plant-strong” and healthy without eating animals. Have some doubts about that? Go online and search for “vegan and vegetarian athletes.” You'll come up with names like Anil Kumble, cricket champion, tennis star Novak Djokovic, and Patrick Baboumian, Germany's Strongest Man. Or ultramarathon champion Scott Jurek; Fiona Oakes, fastest female to run a marathon on all seven continents; David Meyer, winner of World Championship gold medals in Jiu-jitsu; Mika Irestre, competitive roller derby player, vegan since age four. And lots more. . .

Give some real thought to vegetarianism – for your health, for the health of our planet, and for slaughtered animals. Do some research



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from solid sources, like those in the online book *Being Vegetarian* (<https://rspb.org/ebooks.html>).

But whether or not you choose to be vegetarian or vegan, do choose to be aware of what you're eating. A lot of people unfortunately don't realize that what they eat affects their body and mind. Athletes, doctors, and nutritionists know better, and so can you. Like a runner in training for competition, eat food that makes you strong and healthy, tastes good, and makes you feel great.



13

My Parents Say I'm Driving Them Crazy

Slammed any doors lately?

Maybe your parents say you're driving them crazy, but are they driving you crazy, too?

Always on your case... Where you go. When you come home. Who you hang out with. Homework. Grades. Screen time. Cleaning the house. Even worse, cleaning your room. The list could be endless.

What's up with all this conflict? And how can you get your parents to chill and just appreciate having wonderful you around?

"What's up" is the fact that you're growing up. You're not a little kid anymore, and you don't want to be treated like one. That's important, natural, and positive.

However, sometimes it seems like parents haven't gotten the message. They still treat you like you're years younger. That may be natural, too, but it doesn't feel so positive.

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Sometimes it seems like a million things are more important than obeying your parents. You have a lot going on that they don't have a clue about – not necessarily bad things, but stuff you just don't share with them.

You want your parents to see you as the maturing teen you are, but you sometimes act immature. You yell. You stomp out of the room. Maybe throw things. They ask you to do something simple, and you find a ton of really logical reasons to delay.

Empty the dishwasher? Now? Really? Before the TV show is over? In the middle of a video game? While you're texting a group chat?

Arguing and delaying. You're resisting authority both actively and passively.

Sometimes your parents yell back. They don't know what happened to the "old you." You're both frustrated.

What's a teen to do?

First, see what's good about the situation. Becoming more independent is a crucial part of becoming a young adult. It takes courage to stand up for yourself, to assert that you're not just "a little kid" any more. At the same time, let's face it – we all have to follow rules sometimes. Ask yourself if this is one of those times. . . .

Second, be smarter about this whole thing. Go for being rational over being mad.

Acting like a little kid is a lousy way to prove you're not a little kid.

Most of the people who throw tantrums – yell, stomp, slam – are upset toddlers or angry teens. *(If your parents are regularly doing those things, let them know how their behavior affects you. Perhaps you have a relative or close family friend you can also talk to.)*

Okay, being rational is really hard when you're mad. Your still-developing prefrontal cortex (the bit that allows you to step back and think about your reaction) has been hijacked by your amygdala ("I want

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it, and now"). (See Chapter 2 on the teen brain). Hit pause. Say you need a few minutes to think or take a walk.

Consider how you'd present your side to an adult who wasn't your parent. What points would you want to make? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your ideas? (Word up here: You're going to have to do better than "Everybody else gets to." While that's a strong argument from a teen point of view, you want to convince adults, and they want to see you develop your own independent, mature thinking.)

It's also fine to admit that you still want to please your parents. Underneath any opposition and all the ways you "question authority" is a person who still wants to make Mama and Baba / Mom and Dad happy, to shine for them. And guess what? They still want to make you happy, too. Remember that you bring joy and laughter into the family, not just a load of problems. Together, the whole family can figure out the issues. That's the way love works.

All of you just need to find a way for that love to flow through the changes of the teen years.

The place you've traditionally had in your family is shifting. Maybe you were always *so* easy to get along with, polite, good at schoolwork, eager to do things with your parents. Now you don't want to hang out with them nearly as much as you want to spend time with your friends. Often, you'd rather be on your phone than talking to your folks.



Adults have been complaining about teens for a long time. 2,400 years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said, "Young people think they know everything and are always quite sure about it." But maybe he was just having a grouchy day...

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If this were a book for parents, I'd ask them to be great models for you. To be patient when you aren't, firm when they know they're right. To answer your yelling with a calm voice. To remember that biology is playing a big part here and that you'll continue to grow up – physically and emotionally. To remember also that they'll have to change, too. That you represent a new generation in a changing world.

But since this is a book for teens, I'm going to ask you to be a great model for yourself. Imagine the best version of you. Your own version, not your parents'. Maybe you're an artist. Maybe you tear up the soccer field. Or paint or skateboard or write. Great!

Those are things you *do*, but what kind of person is doing them?

Is this version of you happy? Independent? Grateful? Do you have goals? Self-respect? Friends?

Or do you feel stuck in gloom and irritability, mad at yourself and most other people?

I doubt that's what you prefer, even if you do feel like that sometimes.

So work for what you really want. Make the right choice about the way you act – one that your best self is proud of.

Remember Dumbledore from *Harry Potter*? He was wise about everything, and he said, *"It is not our abilities that show who we really are; it's our choices."*



14

Sex and Relationships

Teens and sex. Let's do some straight talking. Not "The Talk" because I'm assuming you already know the biology of sex. However, there's a whole lot more than biology to discuss.

Many of you have had those conversations with friends, parents, in health classes, or in youth groups. You've asked and answered questions or just listened without saying a thing. But you'd be a rare teen – in fact, a rare person – if you didn't have more questions or want more answers.

The plain truth: Sexual desire is a powerful energy in creation. Without sexual desire, our planet's living creatures, including humans, would quickly die out. But sex is commonly used for a long list of other reasons – to satisfy physical desire, whether or not a couple cares for one another; to fix a tottering relationship; to control the other person; to satisfy curiosity; or to respond to peer pressure. Or because people think everyone else is doing it. (They're not.)

Are these *good* reasons to have sex?

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Do you wonder what a healthy relationship looks like?

To help figure this out,
ask yourself what you *value*.

What have your parents and culture taught you? What do spiritual or religious teachings have to say? What have you decided on your own?

People all around the planet have different values and social pressures regarding sex, abstinence, and activities like kissing and touching. You know your parents' values, and that they need to be respected. No matter whether we are liberal or conservative on these issues, however, one value is healthy for everyone: To respect ourselves – our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves.

Focusing on this value, on respecting yourself, can help you figure out your choices. For example, think about the movies, websites, or TV shows you click on. The magazines you flip through. The conversations you have. We know that what we see, hear, and say has lingering effects. Choose the high road.

Riding along that high road will help if your ideal is to stay away from sexual activities altogether while you're a teen. You can be close to someone you love without being sexual.

Closeness – *intimacy* – is also created by simple things like laughing together, singing to each other, looking the person in the eye and saying what you like about them. Asking fun questions. Enjoying shared interests, playing the same sports.

Of course, we all want relationships to be healthy. What does that really mean?

Sex and Relationships

Simple answer. Healthy relationships make you feel good about yourself. They include these qualities:

Respect

- ☉ You listen to each other
- ☉ You treat each other like friends
- ☉ You're proud of each other
- ☉ You're kind to each other

Trust

- ☉ You're both cool with spending time apart
- ☉ You feel secure about the relationship
- ☉ You trust each other's decisions

Honesty

- ☉ You can both admit when you're wrong
- ☉ You can tell each other the truth

Equality

- ☉ You both make decisions about how you spend your time
- ☉ You give and take equally

Good communication

- ☉ You can talk about your feelings with each other
- ☉ You can disagree without disrespecting each other

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But not all relationships are healthy. . .

If you're not feeling good about your relationship, how do you know whether that feeling is just you being weird and insecure, or a real warning sign?

It's a real warning sign. Trust your gut. Forget worrying about the weird and insecure part. You deserve to feel valued and respected, to have an honest relationship without any hint of violence or verbal abuse, to have “no” heard and respected.

Physical violence of any kind – hitting, choking, throwing things, grabbing you too hard, blocking the door when you try to leave – is completely unacceptable.

Verbal or emotional abuse is also unacceptable. Nobody gets to insult you, blame you for their anger, or make you feel like you don't deserve love. They don't get to control where you go or who you hang out with.

Hacking into your online accounts, controlling what you do on social media, stalking your profiles, pressure to use drugs or alcohol – don't tolerate any of these.

What can you do?

If any of these things is going on, you need to get out of the situation. Walk away, even though doing so can be really hard, especially if you love the person who's being abusive. Don't let them talk you out of it. Advice from people who really know is: ***If they threaten to hurt you or themselves or someone else, tell an adult you trust right away. Your safety is the most important thing. Don't be afraid to ask your parents and friends for help. If breaking up in person sounds scary or unsafe, it might be better to call, text, or email.***

Sex and Relationships

Afterwards, you might miss the person and feel guilty. That's normal and okay. Keep reminding yourself why you left them in the first place.

You deserve better. It's not your fault. You're not alone.

You have a heart to care for...

Your parents may have very clear views which you respect, but others may be putting you under pressure – to drink, to take drugs, to have sex. When a relationship becomes sexual, it changes. You're both more vulnerable, more attached, more easily hurt. Emotions can become a tangle. Often, expectations begin to develop – ones you may not have bargained for. Think! Are you ready for the complications that, consciously or unconsciously, come with having a sexual partner? *If you're not sure about any of these things, you can wait.*

And a spirit to nurture

What feeds your inner self? What deepens your self-respect? What brings you long-term happiness? Think about who you want to be, where you want to focus your energy, what your goals are.

No need to rush and lots of reasons to wait. Sex will still be around when the time comes.



15

Suicide – the Toughest Chapter

I'll take your hand when thunder roars
And I'll hold you close,
I'll stay the course.
I promise you from up above
That we'll take what comes,
take what comes, love.

Imagine Dragons, Walking the Wire

Please read every word of this chapter. Skim or skip whatever else you want, but read this one. If it's not important for you, it could be important for a friend.

For teens globally, suicide is the third leading cause of death, after road accidents and HIV deaths. In nations where HIV isn't rampant, suicide generally comes in second.

Why would a person kill himself/herself? What could create such hopelessness that death seems to be the only escape?

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Sometimes we just don't know, because people take the answers with them when they die. Only approximately one in three people who commit suicide leave a note. However, many people have **attempted** suicide – most of whom have lived for years afterwards and eventually died of natural causes – and we've learned from them. Lots of others have seriously thought about it and shared those thoughts. Thinking of suicide is far more common than most of us know.

A very sad stat: About 30% of transgender individuals have tried to commit suicide, 6.5 times the average rate. They live, and too often die, with the pain of never feeling like they “fit in.” Gay and transgender youth are 3 times more likely to think seriously about suicide than their straight peers.

Suicide victims often believe **they do not belong** and/or **they are a burden to others**.

These beliefs can arise from many different situations. Particularly for teens who feel suicidal, the fear of disappointing parents, peer issues, bullying, or the breakup of a relationship can make them feel that they have problems with no solutions. They feel hopeless. Suicide starts to look like the only way out, the only relief from pain. But it's not.

Honestly – you want honesty, right? – maybe no counselor can cure the family issues. Maybe the relationship is just done. Maybe the problems can't be fixed. **But you, or a friend, can get help to learn how to cope with them in healthy, effective ways.** Many people recover from suicide attempts and have hopeful futures.

At the end of this book (in the “If you want to dig deeper” section) are resources about suicide. However, your greatest resource is a person you trust.

The American Association of Suicidology speaks directly to people considering suicide. Those who have recovered from a suicide attempt want you to know that:

Suicide – the Toughest Chapter

You are not alone. You matter. Life can get better. It may be difficult, but the effort you invest in your recovery will be worth it.

Right now, moving forward may seem impossible. And while it probably won't be easy, many other survivors will tell you that they're glad they held on and worked for a better life. By taking a few steps now, and then a few more when you're ready, you can regain your strength.



Suicide can be prevented.

People who are thinking about killing themselves may send out signals. Knowing how to read those signals can make a difference.

What are the warning signs of suicide? Think, “IS PATH WARM” to help you remember. Those three words together don't make great sense, but the concepts they describe are crucial.

I = Idea. Thinking/talking about suicide. Making comments like, “I don't deserve to live” or “No one would care if I died” or “I won't be a problem for you much longer.” Also, expressing admiration for people who have committed suicide.

S = Substance Abuse. Excessive use of drugs or alcohol.

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- P = Purposelessness.** Feeling that life has no purpose, that there's nothing to look forward to or live for.
- A = Agitation and anxiety,** especially in combination with an inability to sleep, sleeping all the time, eating almost nothing, or eating almost everything.
- T = Trapped.** Believing there is no way out, no choice but death. This may lead to looking for ways to die – a gun, available pills, or something else.
- H = Hopelessness.** The false belief that nothing or no one can help.
- W = Withdrawal.** Pulling away from family and friends. Isolation.
- A = Anger.** Uncontrolled rage.
- R = Recklessness.** Doing things that are risky, perhaps without even thinking about them. Being impulsive without regard for safety.
- M = Mood changes.** Dramatic highs and lows, swinging from extreme excitement and enthusiasm to depression and not caring. Sometimes this extreme mood or depression shows up as unusual neglect of personal appearance or not wanting to do things that used to be fun.

If you or someone you know is showing some of these signs, *talk to someone*. Talking is brave. Sometimes people think that admitting they have suicidal thoughts is admitting that they're weak, but just the opposite is true.

It's okay to admit you are experiencing the IS PATH WARM stuff. Difficult but courageous. Of course, everyone feels these things from time to time, but if you find yourself/someone you know frequently feeling these things, go for help.

Suicide – the Toughest Chapter

Talk to someone you trust. Virtually every country has suicide hotlines. If you need to call – either for yourself or for someone you know – do so. Now, please.

And take care of yourself. The same ingredients that make you happy (see the “Happiness” chapter) also help you get out of a funk that could be dangerous. Call a friend, play music, go for a walk or a run, take a warm bath, paint your fingernails, kick a soccer ball, write in a journal, check out a movie.

Myths about suicide can get in the way of the facts about suicide. Let’s compare a few.

- 1. Myth:** Suicidal teens overreact to life’s events.
Fact: Not true. Just because someone else – often an adult – thinks a suicidal teen is overreacting doesn’t make it so. Even if something isn’t a big deal to one person, it can cause a lot of stress for someone else. In addition, perceived crises are just as predictive of suicidal behavior as actual ones. For instance, if a teen *incorrectly* thinks that their best friend has deserted them, the emotional impact can be as powerful as if the friend *really* has deserted them.
- 2. Myth:** Suicide is an act of aggression, anger, or revenge.
Fact: Despite how the media portrays suicide, the reasons that teens and adults kill themselves almost always stem from *feeling they don’t belong* and/or *feeling that the people they love will be better off without them*.
- 3. Myth:** Suicides happen without warning.
Fact: Very often someone who is suicidal tries to let at least one other person know how they feel. They don’t necessarily say, “I’m

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thinking about killing myself.” Because people don’t always ask for help directly, it’s important to know the warning signs (above) of suicidal intentions.

Take seriously anyone who talks about hurting themselves. It is never helpful to assume they’re “just trying to get attention.” Speaking about even the possibility of suicide is a plea for help. Then it’s time to call a responsible person you trust or a hotline.

4. Myth: Suicide is selfish.

Fact: People who commit suicide *do* consider how their deaths will affect the people they love. However, rather than thinking, “My mother would be incredibly hurt if I died,” they think, “My mother will be better off after I’m gone.” People who are suicidal feel very, very alone.

5. Myth: People who die by suicide don’t make future plans.

Fact: People may make extensive plans – to buy a house, try out for the football team, go on vacation, have lunch with a friend – and still be planning suicide. They may buy a new pair of shoes or sign up for a computer class right before their suicide. This is hard for people who have never seriously considered killing themselves to understand. Someone can have two tracks going in their mind. “Those who are dead by suicide today had plans for the future yesterday.”

Suicide is sad to read about, sad to write about, sad to talk about. But absolutely vital. The talking, writing, and reading save lives.

People are afraid to talk about suicide, afraid to admit they have suicidal thoughts, afraid to admit that someone in their family committed suicide. They don’t want to be judged or thought crazy.

Everyone wants to be heard, accepted, and loved. We can do that: Hear, accept, love.



16

Where Are You From?

If you wish you had even a little money for every time you've been asked that, read on.

Maybe you fit into a category; maybe you don't. Global nomad. TCK (Third Culture Kid, with family from one culture, living in another, and creating a third, blended, culture for yourself). NRI (Non-resident Indian). Stranger in a strange land.

The world is changing. Everyone these days is adjusting to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Maybe your parents were born in one country but have emigrated. Perhaps you speak one language at home and a different one at school. Maybe you translate for the elders in your family. Your parents expect different things from you than other parents do from their children. Perhaps your skin is a different color than most of the people around you.

Or your family lives in one country and you go to boarding school in another one. Or an international boarding school inside your home country.

You wonder where you really fit in, where 'home' is. Maybe you feel like you don't belong anywhere, even in your own family.

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“Code-switching” is “the act of changing between two or more languages when you speak.”

Perhaps you juggle cultures – one at home, another at school, another with your friends, and yet another out in public. To some degree, **everyone** has to keep different balls up in the air in different settings. For you, though, they don’t ever seem to land. You’re “code-switching” with more than just language.

What are your unique advantages and unique problems?

As we figure that out, let’s look at relationship patterns that can apply to TCKs, immigrants, and global nomads everywhere.

Relationship Patterns

Do you fit into one of these categories??

Foreigner

Look different

Think different

Hidden Immigrant

Look alike

Think different

Adopted

Look different

Think alike

Mirror

Look alike

Think alike

Foreigner – If this is you, it’s understandable if you feel like “a stranger in a strange land.” You don’t look like the people around you. You may not sound like them, either, even if you’re speaking

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the same language. You see the world differently in lots of ways. You have different traditions, different favorite foods, histories, and social expectations.

Hidden Immigrant – Oh, sure, you look like everyone else, but you're not really like them. You wear the same kinds of clothes – a baseball cap, jeans, skirt, hijab, turban, or salwar kameez. Lots of others have your same color skin, and you speak alike. But you're not. Perhaps you were born in another country. Perhaps you've lived outside of your family's original culture for years, and when you return, it doesn't feel like home. People around you assume you think and believe like they do because you look similar. But you don't.

Adopted – Okay, you don't look like most of the people around you, but that doesn't mean anything. Or does it? You're perfectly at home where you live – perhaps you were born there or have lived there for years. However, some people treat you like you don't belong because you look different. They might make assumptions that aren't true, and “Where are you from?” is something you hear waaaay too much.

Mirror – If you fit the “mirror” pattern, you're a global nomad/TCK/NRI who fits in both physically and culturally. You've adopted the deeper levels of the culture around you. That means that you have similar views on lots of things, like dating, respect for old people, whether or not being on time is important, or gender roles. But what happens if you leave? Maybe your parents want to return to their original culture. Maybe you want to go to university somewhere else. Will you need to adjust?

People whose lives involve different cultures *code-switch* more frequently than those who know only one culture. In its simplest

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form, code-switching is going back and forth between different languages. That requires a lot more than just choosing different words. One language may have a more formal way to address parents and teachers. Or give status to one gender over another. Joke more. Maybe what's funny in English is a big thud in Hindi, or the other way around.

Cultural codes are written in invisible ink.

Maybe you have to “code-switch” in lots of ways even in one language. Everyone does sometimes. You talk about things with your buddies that you'd never mention to your family. You yell at your best friend sometimes, but never at your grandmother. But, for you, this switching happens more than just sometimes – it can be the way you live most of the time. That's stressful.

But it also helps you develop social smarts. You're someone who picks up invisible cues. And cultural codes are written in invisible ink.

When you first arrive at a new culture (school, country, social group), it's typical to feel clueless. Best to breathe deeply and go slowly. Lots of things are different. For example, in some places, opening a gift as soon as you get it is normal; in others, that's seen as greedy. Showing the bottom of shoe soles is very offensive in many Arab, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist countries, but no problem in others. Asking “What do you do?” is common in some places but insulting in others – like asking “How much money do you earn?”

If you need to learn a new set of social expectations, relax, give yourself time, be positive. You'll get it.

Advantages of being a global nomad/TCK/NRI

First, you probably speak more than one language – maybe several. What a huge advantage in life – socially, intellectually, and professionally.

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You understand different customs and traditions. You might see different points of view more easily than others. Because you've had to adapt to different cultures, you are often, well, more adaptable.

You're observant – something you may have learned the hard way. You've learned to look around and ask yourself, "How does life work here?"

You know people in more than one country.

Universities and employers are eager for your talents.

You have lots going for you.

And some challenges, too.

Challenges of being a global nomad/TCK/NRI

You need to adapt to different languages – not just the words, but the slang and idioms, too. Humor, respect, rebellion, flirtation, how much is too much. . . .

Loyalties can be confusing. Politics, patriotism, and values can conflict between nations. And whose football team do you root for?

If you live outside your home culture long enough, you can start to feel like you just don't know/understand it anymore.

Figuring out your own values can be harder when you juggle different cultural values. You may feel guilty or disloyal about adopting new attitudes and beliefs. Switching between cultures might end up with your feeling lonely and tired. Or angry. Or like you'll never fit in.

You may face racism. To some people, the color of your skin matters more than what's in your heart or head. You may deal with racist attitudes and stereotypes in school and public places. It can get very ugly. *Islamic terrorists. The 'N' word. Immigrants stealing jobs. Asian whiz kids stealing the top college admissions.* Hold on to your inner confidence and pride. You don't want ignorant and bigoted ideas to

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affect your heart and mind, and you certainly don't want to start having those ideas yourself. If you've ever been judged by your skin/accents/social class, you know how painful those bullying judgments can be.

Hand-in-hand with racist beliefs are religious prejudices and lack of understanding. Many people know very little (or nothing) of others' sacred teachings, cultural practices, or traditional dress. Unfortunately, many teens who are "foreigners," "hidden immigrants," or "adopted" (*see definitions above*) find that people from the dominant culture around them don't understand the differences between Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists. They may not know what a hijab is, or a keffiyeh. They may think that everyone who wears a turban is Arabic. They may not appreciate that you have religious celebrations and high holy days of your own.

And if *you* don't understand other cultures and religions, educate yourself. Spend time with someone of a different race, a different faith. Nothing removes prejudice as thoroughly as one person getting to know another.

Making things easier

How do you wade through the challenges and prejudices you find when cultures cross each other (and sometimes clash)?

There are lots of different styles and sizes of boots you can wear as you stride/stomp/dance through different cultures.

So get your feet (heart/spirit/mind) a little protection.

One thing that's helpful is acknowledging that TCKs/NRIs/global nomads have some unique issues. You want people to understand your struggles – which isn't a unique desire, but which may be harder in your case. Many people are clueless about your challenges, or they forget to remember what you're dealing with.

Speak up, be honest, repeat as needed. Your school and community

Where Are You From?

very likely have programs to tackle the issues of racism and religious intolerance. You can get involved or start your own.

No one is born hating another person because of the color of their skin. People have to learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.

Nelson Mandela

Find friends who understand or who will work on understanding. And who will remember to remember that you sometimes get confused and unsure about things they take for granted.

Highly recommended: Find friends you can hang out with in person, not just online.

Talk to your parents and family. If that's hard for you, maybe start by giving them something to read about NRI/TCK/nomad teens, such as *Third Culture Kids. 3rd Edition: Growing Up Among Worlds* (see the "If you want to dig deeper" section at the end of this book).

Be honest with your teachers and school counselors. You don't have to talk to **every** teacher you have; just start with one. Ask for a few minutes to sit down together. Or if that makes you too nervous, begin with an email. You don't need to go into lots of detail – just tell them how you're doing, what you're struggling with, what comes easy for you. And if you don't want to speak to other teachers, ask the one you choose to pass on the conversation. Trust me on this: Teachers love to talk about their students. They're happy to relay helpful info about you.

You need to help people help you with your challenges. Be honest. Be real.

Be comfortable with yourself. Not perfect, not totally cool all the time, not the best at everything. But wonderful anyway. You – unique among the billions on Planet Earth.

You Can Help

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Mahatma Gandhi

At first, Dev didn't want to do it. Standing in a line of people he didn't know, filling boxes with tin cans and packaged food for struggling families. But his school required what they called "community service," and a whopping one hundred hours of it. He'd been putting off getting his last few hours done, and now he was stuck with this. The line of strangers and boxes.

People all around him were friendly, chatting with newcomers and each other. There were a few kids he recognized, no one he really knew. Nobody had a cell phone out, which was odd, but then again, everyone's hands were busy. Pick up a package of beans, wedge it beside a can of corn, and tuck a box of rice nearby. A couple of teens were exchanging stories about their community service work, and they smiled over at Dev. The work wasn't glamorous, but folks seemed happy

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to be doing it. One afternoon a month spent putting together food boxes for delivery to homeless shelters and low-income housing developments.

He listened to the voices, often interrupted by laughter. The woman on one side of him was talking about hiking up the nearby hills. On the other side, a man was happy that his kids loved reading *Harry Potter*. Then one older man, face full of whiskers and shirt full of holes, spoke up to say he was living in a shelter. That he'd be eating dinner out of one of these boxes. That he was trying to help someone else have dinner, too.

Dev shifted from foot to foot, a little uncomfortable. He was here because he had to be. He'd leave soon and go home to a big dinner and dessert. Everyone else seemed to be here because they *wanted* to.

Then Dev did a brave thing. He listened. He heard the stories moving up and down the line. He saw that the people around him felt good about spending time doing something for someone else. Dev began to feel kind of good about it, too. (Plus, there was a chance he'd make a new friend or two.)

We hear from wise teachers throughout time and from every culture that humans are meant to help one another. That giving – your time, labor, money, art, music, ideas, self – without expecting a reward or payment is a path to happiness.

We so often see the world as greedy, dishonest, selfish. Well, sometimes it is. How can we change that?

One selfless deed at a time. Paying it forward.

You Can Help

All kinds of organizations in every town and city need your help. So do your neighbors. And friends. And students in your school. So does your synagogue, gurdwara, mosque, church, temple, or sangat.

You can work to clean up a park or a beach, take care of animals, read to the elderly, tutor, coach, translate, do office chores, build houses with Habitat for Humanity, or do literally hundreds of other interesting projects. Volunteering helps you see a world that's bigger than your family, friends, and school. It helps you get comfortable around people you don't yet know at all – an important skill when you leave high school. And since some adults don't spend any time around teens, it shows them what wonderful humans you can be!

Or you can do something totally unique. At one high school, students created artwork that they sold in order to raise money for Amnesty International. They gathered any kind of handmade creations – pottery, knitting, water/oil/charcoal artwork, quilts, jewelry,



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original music CDs, baked goods – and spread them around tables in the cafeteria one evening right before winter holidays, when everyone was in a spending mood. The entire community was invited to walk around and buy what they wanted, without knowing who had made what. When asked how much something cost, the answer was always, “Whatever you want to pay.” Everyone had a blast and raised money for a great cause.

But you know the best thing about that whole evening? Watching the faces of students when a complete stranger admired and bought something they’d made by hand. Talk about lit up.

Giving without expecting to get back is flat-out beautiful. It connects us to each other and makes the tough parts of life feel softer. It’s a bit of honey in our hearts, calm in our minds, and sweetness in our souls.



18

Saving the Most Important Thing for Last

Let's get right to it.

The most important thing is *knowing yourself*.

As you understand more of who you are, what you really want and need, why you do what you do, then the other important things start to fall into place:

Feeling connected to your world. To people. To animals. To nature.

Accepting the constant changes in your mind and body.

Appreciating what you have.

Being happier and more relaxed.

But let's not lie. This thing about knowing ourselves is a long-term project. Lifelong. Fortunately, it's fascinating because it's about *you!*

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It's an adventure! Okay, not the traveling-the-world-with-a-backpack kind of adventure. Not hiking the length of the Nile River (all 4,200 miles). Not a wildlife safari to photograph tigers. Not that kind of adventure.

A more important one.

Because whatever you do and wherever you go, you take yourself along for the journey. And traveling with a stranger for the rest of your life could get old.



So find out who you are! What pushes and pulls you, what gives you energy. Or drains that energy. What kind of friends you feel good around – who picks you up, who brings you down. Figure out if you want to be part of a tribe or just have one or two great friends.

Find someone you can go to for help, advice, perspective. Someone you trust. Think about what you **believe**, what kind of person you want to be. You don't want to become someone you don't like. Consider your ideas about spirit/consciousness/soul. Do you feel that human life has meaning and purpose? How do these thoughts affect your life?

Saving the Most Important Thing for Last

And don't be afraid when your feelings about any of these things change. Nothing in life is fixed. You're not stuck being one way for the rest of your life.

A question to ask yourself from time to time: What helps me feel good about myself?

All of your thoughts, feelings, and connections are nurtured in simple ways. But you must be awake to develop them. Too much of anything – screen time, couch time, schoolwork, sleep, exercise, food – numbs the spirit. Slowly, day by day, you can find a balance. Rest/exercise. Reading/watching TV. Hanging with friends/hanging with family.

On it goes, making choices, growing up. You're hopeful, curious, adventurous, sometimes full of wonder, sometimes confused, always connected by love to other people.

If You Want to Dig Deeper...

books, videos, and websites

1. Multi-topic websites and books

Websites move – the links here were all OK in 2021. If a website's gone, google the name and you'll usually find its new location.

For information on a wide variety of teen-related issues check out *The Child Mind Institute* (look, we've all been a child) at their website <https://childmind.org/topics-a-z/>
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens: the ultimate teenage success guide. Book by Sean Covey published by Touchstone Books (there's a Miniature Edition too).

Talk With Your Kids: Conversations About Ethics – Honesty, Friendship, Sensitivity, Fairness, Dedication, Individuality – and 103 Other Things That Really Matter. Book by Michael Parker, published by Black Dog & Leventhal.

2. Websites, videos, books linked to chapters

The teen brain (Ch. 2)

“The Teen Brain: 6 Things to Know” (US website) <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-6-things-to-know/index.shtml>

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“Brain Development in Teenagers” (OxfordSparks video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dISmdb5zfiQ>

Body image and eating disorders (Ch. 3)

“A guy’s guide to body image” and other useful information for all teens at Teenshealth (website). <http://teenshealth.org/en/teens/male-bodyimage.html>

“50 People, 1 Question.” If you could change one thing about your body... (Video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0tEcxLDDd4>

“Beat Eating Disorders” (website, UK) www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

NEDA – National Eating Disorders Association (U.S. website) www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

National Institute for Mental Health (US website) <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/eating-disorders/index.shtml>

Bullying (Ch. 4)

Listen to Shane Koyczan tell his story. “To This Day” (Video <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>)

“Dealing with Bullying” (US website) <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/bullies.html>

Careers and ‘success’ (Ch. 5)

“Before You Feel Pressure – WATCH THIS” by Jay Shetty
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSL9oJOQ7Rs>

If You Want to Dig Deeper... books, videos, and websites

“Build your own life. Don’t just live one – build one.” – Ashton Kutcher. Watch him speak at the Teen Choice Awards: (Video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNXwKGZHmDc>

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens: the ultimate teenage success guide. Book by Sean Covey published by Touchstone Books (there’s a Miniature Edition too).

Anxiety and depression (Ch. 6)

Listen to “You Will Be Found” from the award-winning musical *Dear Evan Hansen* (Video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFZmT-LRMBM>

Child Mind Institute (US website) <https://childmind.org/topics-a-z/> (Depression, Anxiety, and lots more besides)

Canadian Mental Health Association (website) <https://cmha.ca/document-category/mental-health> (there’s a quiz to check out your stress level at <https://cmha.ca/whats-your-stress-index>)

“Calming the Teenage Mind in the Classroom” (CNN report) <https://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/health/mindfulness-teenagers-schools-stress/index.html>

Drugs, alcohol and nicotine (Ch. 7)

Drugs.ie – info for Teens http://www.drugs.ie/drugs_info/for_teen/ – A useful site, this one based in Ireland. There are confidential drugs helplines in many countries – just look online.

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“Is marijuana addictive?” National Institute of Drug Abuse (US website) <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>

Grief (Ch. 8)

Mourning Hope Grief Center. Resources: I’m a Teen <https://www.mourninghope.org/griefresources/imateen.html>

The Dougy Center. Help for Teens. <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/help-for-teens/>

“Prince Harry reveals he had counselling to deal with his mother’s death after two years of ‘total chaos’” <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/prince-harry-reveals-counselling-deal-10240069>

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas. Book by Alan D. Wolfelt, published by Companion Press.

Happiness (Ch. 9)

Happy, a documentary movie directed by Roko Belic, visits more than a dozen countries to seek out proven recipes for happiness among people rich or poor. See the trailer free at <https://www.thehappymovie.com/film/>

High school and ‘fitting in’ (Ch. 10)

Tasha Rube “How to Fit in at High School” (editable Wiki-type website) <https://www.wikihow.com/Fit-In-at-High-School>

One Voice: “America’s Got Talent 2016 Audition – One Voice 12 Member Acapella Group Powerful Vocals” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n49t-6GaRYA>

Social media (Ch. 11)

“Brené Brown on empathy” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

“Survey says teens find some benefit from social media”
News report at <https://www.engadget.com/2018-11-30-survey-teens-benefit-social-media.html>

“Logged off: Meet the teens who refuse to use social media”
News report at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/aug/29/teens-desert-social-media>

Food, health and the environment (Ch. 12)

Vegetarian Resource Group (US website) <http://www.vrg.org/>

Being Vegetarian. Book by Rebecca Hammons, published by Radha Soami Satsang Beas. Ebook free online at www.rssb.org (click ‘publications’ > ‘ebooks’).

Cowspiracy, video directed by Kip Anderson & Keegan Kuhn. <http://www.cowspiracy.com/>

What the Health, video directed by Kip Anderson & Keegan Kuhn. <http://www.whatthehealthfilm.com/about/>

Forks Over Knives, video directed by Lee Fulkerson. <https://www.forksoverknives.com/the-film/>

Healthy relationships (Ch. 14)

“Healthy relationships.” (US-based website) <http://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/>

Suicide (Ch. 15)

“Be the one to save a life” (US website) <https://www.bethe1to.com/> or outside US *International Association for Suicide Prevention* <https://www.iasp.info/>

“Know the Warning Signs of Suicide” (US website) <http://www.suicidology.org/resources/warning-signs>

Canadian Mental Health Association (Canadian website) <https://cmha.ca/documents/preventing-suicide>

Samaritans (UK website) <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (US website) <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Cross-cultural issues (Ch. 16)

Third Culture Kids. 3rd Edition: Growing Up Among Worlds by Ruth Van Reken, Michael Pollock and David Pollock. 2017. London: Nicholas Brealey/Hodder & Stoughton.

RSSB Books on Spirituality

RSSB TRADITION

Sar Bachan Prose – *Soami Ji Maharaj*

Sar Bachan Poetry – *Soami Ji Maharaj*

Spiritual Letters – *Baba Jaimal Singh*

Basic Principles of Sant Mat – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

The Dawn of Light – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Discourses on Sant Mat, Volume I – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

My Submission – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Philosophy of the Masters (5 volumes) – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Spiritual Gems – *Maharaj Sawan Singh*

Discourses on Sant Mat, Volume II – *Maharaj Jagat Singh*

The Science of the Soul – *Maharaj Jagat Singh*

Die to Live – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Divine Light – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Light on Saint John – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Light on Saint Matthew – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Light on Sant Mat – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

The Path – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Quest for Light – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Spiritual Discourses (2 volumes) – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Spiritual Heritage – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Spiritual Perspectives (3 volumes) – *Maharaj Charan Singh*

Awareness of the Divine – *John Davidson*

Call of the Great Master – *Daryai Lal Kapur*

Concepts & Illusions: A Perspective – *Sabina Oberoi*

Essential Sant Mat – *B. Bocking*

from self to Shabd – *Hector Esponda Dubin*

Heaven on Earth – *Daryai Lal Kapur*

Honest Living – *M. F. Singh*

In Search of the Way – *Flora E. Wood*

The Inner Voice – *C. W. Sanders*

Liberation of the Soul – *J. Stanley White*

Life Is Fair: The Law of Cause and Effect – *Brian Hines*

RSSB Books on Spirituality

- Living Meditation – *Hector Esponda Dubin*
Message Divine – *Shanti Sethi*
The Mystic Philosophy of Sant Mat – *Peter Fripp*
Mysticism: The Spiritual Path – *Lekh Raj Puri*
The Path of the Masters – *Julian P. Johnson*
Radha Soami Teachings – *Lekh Raj Puri*
Reflections on Sant Mat Teachings – *T. R. Shangari*
and Kirpal Singh Khak
A Soul's Safari – *Netta Pfeifer*
A Spiritual Primer – *Hector Esponda Dubin*
Treasure beyond Measure – *Shanti Sethi*
A Wake Up Call: Beyond Concepts & Illusions –
Sabina Oberoi and Beverly Chapman
With a Great Master in India – *Julian P. Johnson*
With the Three Masters (3 volumes) – *Rai Sahib Munshi Ram*

MYSTIC TRADITION

- Bulleh Shah – *J. R. Puri and T. R. Shangari*
Dadu: The Compassionate Mystic – *K. N. Upadhyaya*
Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar – *K. N. Upadhyaya*
Guru Nanak: His Mystic Teachings – *J. R. Puri*
Guru Ravidas: The Philosopher's Stone – *K. N. Upadhyaya*
Jalal al-Din Rumi: Divān-e Shams-e Tabrizi – *Farida Maleki*
Kabir: The Great Mystic – *Isaac A. Ezekiel*
Kabir: The Weaver of God's Name – *V. K. Sethi*
Many Voices, One Song: The Poet Mystics of Maharashtra –
Judith Sankaranarayan
Mira: The Divine Lover – *V. K. Sethi*
Saint Namdev – *J. R. Puri and V. K. Sethi*
Sant Charandas – *T. R. Shangari*
Sant Paltu: His Life and Teachings – *Isaac A. Ezekiel*
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INDIA HEADQUARTERS

The Secretary
Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Dera Baba Jaimal Singh
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