

HOW TO TALK ABOUT BIG QUESTIONS // 3 WAYS THEY CAN LEARN TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL // IS THE APPLE WATCH WORTH IT?

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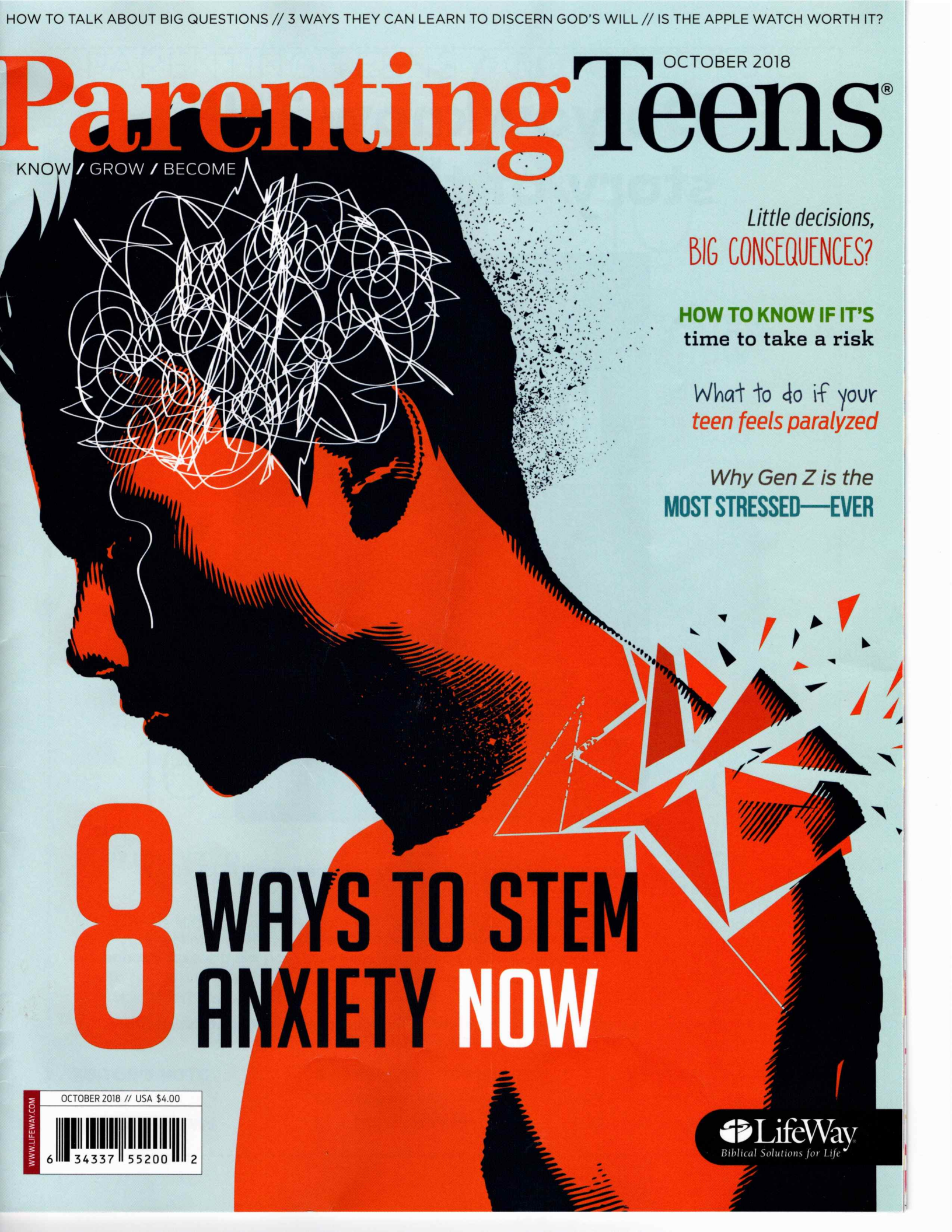
OCTOBER 2018

*Little decisions,  
BIG CONSEQUENCES?*

**HOW TO KNOW IF IT'S**  
time to take a risk

What to do if your  
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Why Gen Z is the  
**MOST STRESSED—EVER**



## 8 WAYS TO STEM ANXIETY NOW

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# 8 WAYS TO STEM ANXIETY NOW

Is your teen losing sleep over the big test? Irritable about her college choice? Tossing and turning about which club to cut? You might have an anxiety problem. Here are some ways to get ahead of it before it consumes them.

BY ABBY HILL

**A**nxiety is an unfortunately common side effect of modern life that most adults experience at one time or another. Anxiety, however, is no longer just an adult problem—rates of depression and anxiety among teenagers have increased by 70 percent in the past 25 years.

School-related stress is the most common anxiety reported by teens, as they feel an increasing pressure to perform at a superior level academically. High-stakes testing, class GPA competition, and college admission requirements are top academic stressors that hit students as early as middle school.

Teens are well aware that outstanding performance in academics or sports may hold the key to financing a college education. They feel overwhelmed and anxious as they struggle to balance the real and perceived high expectations placed upon them. While peer pressure will always be a part of the adolescent experience, pressure placed upon *themselves* to be the best—every time, in all things—contributes significantly to the anxiety today's teenagers feel.

As a parent, you must make significant decisions about the goals and expectations you will set along the way. Time must be managed, and priorities must be constantly reassessed. As teens develop, they will take on more personal responsibility for their own choices and decisions. Cognitively, they are capable of increasingly sophisticated and complex thinking, yet these abilities are new and in the early stages of practice. Teens still need, and want, parental input and guidance in managing the demands of life, even if they don't admit it.

We can allow anxiety some credit in that it spurs us to do well in the things we hold most important. That's why those with the highest personal standards and goals—



# TEENS STILL NEED, AND WANT, PARENTAL INPUT AND GUIDANCE IN MANAGING THE DEMANDS OF LIFE.

including high-achieving adolescents—are most vulnerable to developing anxieties. A bit of anxiety may serve to motivate and give an extra edge to a performance, but prolonged or heightened anxiety creates a barrier to optimal functioning and disrupts emotional and spiritual well-being.

Some signs that your teen's anxiety needs direct attention include changes in sleeping or eating, excessive worrying, and irritability. A teen who is overcome with anxiety will often begin to struggle in all aspects of life. When unaddressed, extreme anxiety places a teen at risk for substance use, depression, and suicide.

In addition to monitoring your teen for indications of anxiety, here are some practical ways you can lead and support them in pursuing their dreams while maintaining a still and quiet heart.

## **1. Ask your teen what you can do to help lower their stress—and then do it.**

Be open to changing your own behavior. If you tell them, “I just want you to be happy,” make sure you’re not also pressing them to get into the “right” college.

## **2. Believe it or not, teenagers do still want to please their parents.**

Examine your own heart for any signs that things have become “about you” instead of your teen.

## **3. Keep in mind that it may be possible for teens to have too many options, leaving them overscheduled, overcommitted, and overwhelmed.**

Expectations to excel in too many areas may be unrealistic and, ultimately, anxiety-producing. Fine tune your focus and eliminate some options if you need to.

## **4. Agree with your teen on a time management plan in which you can help them stay on top of their daily demands without hounding them.**

Take advantage of technology, for example, to set up texts for reminders of deadlines or to send your teen quick words of encouragement throughout the day.

## **5. Let your teen know that it's OK to change plans (like changing a class, playing one sport instead of two, or waiting to start a part-time job).**

Being able to self-assess and make positive changes is a sign of strength, not failure. Work with your teen to develop a Plan B, even C, if needed.

## **6. Think thanks.**

Overwhelm thoughts of anxiety with thoughts of gratitude. Replace worry with prayers of thanksgiving for the abilities, opportunities, and

options that are available to even “worry about.”

**7. Brainstorm with your teen the times in the past when they were able to manage their anxiety or accomplish a tough goal.** Help them identify how they coped then, and encourage them to draw on those strengths again.

**8. Network with other families of teens for support, encouragement, and to share resources.** Contact your teen's school counselor about services and resources available through the school.

By definition, anxiety is fear about an unknown. Our ability to conquer anxiety is founded in our ability to know that God has our back, He will always prevail, and He always has our best interest in mind—no matter what happens or doesn't happen. Pray with your teen and guide them in leaning on this Scripture:

“‘For I know the plans I have for you’—this is the Lord's declaration—‘plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’”  
—Jeremiah 29:11

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