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# Solving Teenagers

A Concise Blueprint to Understand and Impact Young People

by

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(\*Be sure to visit the last page of this report for a *Special Limited Time Training Offer*)

You're busy. I'm busy. We're all jammed. So, with your permission I'm going to get to the point and go fast. Let me show you some cool stuff then bid you farewell on your journey.

This isn't really a special report or ebook or even an article. *This is a tool* created for the express purpose of building something. And much like going to Home Depot and buying a drill, you don't really care about why anybody made it. You only care about 2 things: "Does this thing drill holes and how much does it cost?"

This drills great holes. And it's free. Let's drill.

Teenagers are awesome and *very easy* to deal with once you know some hidden basics. They're "hiding in plain sight" basics as you'll see in a few minutes. I'm going to share those basics so you can dramatically increase your effectiveness at home and beyond. *Don't be afraid of your teenagers at all because they make total sense.* Really. The teen years are the dawn of adulthood and you need to learn how to embrace the sunrise and begin the process of growing together.

## A Quick Overview

This tool has 3 pieces:

1. Understanding the natural, almost overnight emergence of a new kind of thinking
2. Learning to use the *Design Life* process,
3. Anticipating and handling the most likely to occur problems

Let me quickly explain each. Totally understanding how your teenager thinks boils down to grasping the biological growth of a simple brain talent at around the age of 10-13:

## “Abstract thinking”

This ability never fully existed in your child until then. Knowing about it (and when it emerges) allows you to deal with all the stuff that ripples from it and shakes up your family and makes you lose your sanity. It also helps you understand exactly what they are thinking and why and allows you to connect and impact them in smarter ways. It also suggests how to get your relationship with them on track for the many decades that life that lie ahead of both of you (*The Design Life* process). Handling the biggest problems you’ll face include practical suggestions to get you through these years intact, out of jail and clear of the nuthouse.

That’s the overview. Let’s go deeper.

### I. The Rise of Abstract Thinking

The *Solving Teenagers* story really begins between the ages of 7-8, and ramps up to a climax around 10-13. What happens in that short gap is of epic importance and changes life for everyone, forever. It happened to you once upon a time too, but you don’t remember. Nobody does. But when I tell you, you might have some vague recollections.

Let me teach you about abstract thinking by looking at your own life. Back before your teen years you were bopping along as a kid living your life, chasing bugs and playing games with your pals, eating your greens and trying to avoid adults that always seemed to be mad at you. That was life. Pretty oblivious and innocent. But under the hood your brain was growing fast all by itself; learning and evolving (rapidly making new synaptic connections in the *billions*, soon to be trillions). It was all happening out-of-sight while you were just goofing around living.

Then around the golden age of 10-13 your brain reached a special threshold of complexity (that had started crudely and grew slowly in the 7-8 year old range). Around the age of 10-13 you might have noticed that you began having the faintest flicker of a new kind of thinking ability you'd never really had before. It was just a flicker that became a blow torch in a very short amount of time. The talent is called *abstract thinking*. Abstract thinking made you able to see and experience things in ways you'd never been able to before. It made *a whole bunch of new mental things* possible that were never possible before. And it changed life for you dramatically.

What do I mean by abstract thinking? If you understand what I'm talking about right now it's because you're thinking abstractly, ie. you're thinking worlds of stuff inside your head without moving or talking. As an adult you can look at ideas, this one and others, from different angles, all inside your head. You talk to yourself as you read. You can argue with me. You can think about two things at once like what you need to make for dinner as you continue to read these pages. These are two tasks you switch your mind back and forth on easily. You can also realize you missed out on what I wrote because you were thinking about your childhood and what you were going to cook at the same time and ignoring what I was talking about as you read automatically. Three things at once! All this going on in chains and strings of images and conversations and feelings; different levels of movies and thoughts all happening a kaleidoscope of action inside your head in splits of seconds. You can do all this because your brain thinks abstractly now....a total adult thing to do. *You finished growing into that ability when you were 10-13*. Thank your mom and dad or whoever for keeping you alive that long. And congrats for eating all that spinach ;).

All kinds of changes cascade from that one single cross-over moment (the emergence can happen unusually fast; in days or weeks). And you can never go back. In your case you probably "knew you were here" in a quick span of time. You suddenly (sometimes literally in moments or days) became aware that you were separate and distinct from the world around you. Your world suddenly seemed strange and alive and

“here” (you might remember this). You probably became quiet(er), more observant, more curious, more thoughtful than ever before in your life. You could suddenly see how others saw you. You suddenly realized that there was a private you, a public you, and a “you” you could keep totally secretly inside and not tell anyone (your secret self which you might’ve started writing about in your diary, which become popular during this age). You could see gray areas between right and wrong...and make compelling arguments for either one (we’d later call this explaining, convincing, negotiating, lying). Your hair and clothes and body odor and the mirror became HUGE issues. Embarrassment became the worst thing in the world because you could, for the first time, step outside yourself and imagine what others see of you...and imagine what they must be thinking, both good and bad. Peers and their opinions and fitting in became your primary obsession (what I call “peer fear”). You began looking for things to believe in and love and value. Nothing was more important than aligning with others and being accepted and respected.

And try to remember this one: *You thought you were the smartest person in the world.* From your new perspective *you were* the smartest person in the world. You saw what nobody else could possibly see. You were a genius and everyone, including your parents were dunces! And you stayed that way for about a decade! *A frickin’ DECADE!*

Just remember this: your brain was young and adult-*capable* but totally, completely, sadly empty and inexperienced in any useful real-world knowledge. But you were learning fast. You still had that crazy puppy-energy and curiosity (the early teen years), and those two combined to make your parents’ hair gray. And you were sucking in knowledge and experience as fast as you could, and your brain kept growing and expanding for a complete decade until you were around the age of 25. That’s when your brain had reached full “adult” status in all ways and you began to settle down.

Fast forward to today. You have a kid that recently went through all this. Things just suddenly evolved neurologically and *WHAM!!!*... they weren’t kids anymore. They became full-fledged upright adults; inexperienced and maddeningly cocky but highly

capable. Adult in all ways with unquenchable curiosity and relentless energy. And their brains whirred wildly. They became:

- secretive
- obsessed with their peers
- thinking crazy inexperienced things
- wondering if they're ok
- curious and highly energized
- wanting to experience (taste) things in life...especially forbidden things
- aware of self-esteem; how you felt about yourself
- having extreme body image concerns
- very judgmental about their personal worth
- aware of the need to know who they are (their identity)
- religiously and philosophically inquisitive
- highly sensitive and wondering where they fit in socially
- interested in and obsessed about how others see them
- probing about the psychology and motives of others (this is all new to them)
- obsessive interest in this mysterious, awesome junk between their legs
- rebellious against perceived injustice, pressure, judgment
- believing themselves to be totally grown up and worldly
- able to see things from many different perspectives
- imagining things forward and backwards
- predicting how others think and feel...empathy
- able to work through logic in their mind
- in possession of an extreme 3d thinking ability
- aware of commitments and what that entails long term
- seeing gray zones in beliefs and arguments
- critical and often harsh private assessments of themselves
- driven to make you and other people they value proud of them
- feeling an intense need to be good at something they value

...and lot's more.

*Whew!...this is a lot to wrap your head around. This list might seem intimidating, but it's actually super exciting. These changes mean your kid is healthy. In truth it's beyond awesome.* Seriously; you wouldn't want it any other way. Yes these changes present problems from time to time (rebellion, cocky or thoughtless behavior, trust breaking surprises, experimentation, etc.) but these young people are wrestling with unseen natural forces that they will learn to harness and use as they grow up. With your help.

To do this I suggest you focus on two major abstract thinking qualities now:

\*Adaptation, and

\*Planning/anticipating/executing

First, *adaptation*. Nearly everything you see a teenager doing (good or bad) is *adapted* behavior. By this I mean that they saw something they needed to do and they made themselves do it. *Everything they do is learned*: gaming, texting and smartphone obsession, acting mean, blowing you off, helping old ladies cross streets, shaking hands with strangers, saying something kind or nice for no reason.... everything is an adaptation to some need they sense in their environment. You may or may not *like* their adaptation, but everything they do is actually a sign of adaptability, which is a sign of a healthy mind. So, make them adapt. It's OK....even adaptation to difficult or unpleasant things, like your rules. They *adapt* if they need to. Think about that. As we go along I'll tell you how to help them adapt to you and what you want.

Secondly, *planning, anticipation and execution*. These 3 abstract thinking talents orbit around a common theme that dominates adult minds: Understanding where you're at right now and planning for and handling the unseen future. Adults "game the future" all the time. That means we play out in our minds the best choices and courses of action for our decisions, try to anticipate what will happen if we do this or that, and make the best choice we can with information we have. The problem for teens is that they have so little good information and not much in the way of experience to really anticipate what's going to happen with their choices. They *can't* game too well, but they think they can. So they roll the dice and hope for the best, not knowing that when they get older they'll be much better at anticipating the future. Hopefully they make enough right choices in the mean time and it all works out. The present and the future are all becoming very real to your kid right now in a practical and sometimes scary way. They are good at recognizing plans but not so good at making them and executing them on their own. That's a very adult thing that they have to learn...and they will with your help.

## II. Taking Advantage of the *Design Life* Process

OK. You've got some useful background. Now what? Taking into account the now established abstract logic ability, I created *Design Life Training* to provide a roadmap for thinking and acting on the future. (A copy of the *Design Life Blueprint* is included at the end of this report. If you are viewing this report electronically I'd suggest you printout this *Blueprint* and keep it handy).

You will find that *Design Life Training* is not a step-by-step planning guide as much as a design *process* to help you and your kid stay focused on answering 3 important questions (which we will cover in a minute). It's a way of thinking that allows you to keep the main thing the main thing. Guard rails are better than strict step-by-step rules because life is full of unanticipated surprises. *Life* happens and we all know that means we need to flex. Situations change and you need a *way of thinking* that flexes too. Your life path and situation may change but the way you think about what's ahead (your life plan) should remain steady.

That's *Design Life*. It's built on three very simple questions that I would encourage you to use as the backbone for teaching your kid to dream forward, plan forward, execute forward. The three questions are these (See the *Design Life Blueprint* at the end of this report):

1. What do you want? (What's your big dream, your big goal and something you'd really love to do with your life if anything were possible?)



2. What can/will stop you from getting it? (In other words, don't worry about exactly what you have to do to get to your vision; the step-by-step links. Rather, think about what can or might stop YOU as you proceed...you personally. YOU!...the person looking back at you in the mirror. And everyone is totally different. In real life it is HUGELY important to identify what stops YOU UNIQUELY (things like procrastination, fear, blaming, distractions, lack of resources, blame, complaining, excuse making, physical setbacks, lack of role models, illness, etc.). This *thinking ahead* prepares you for real life much more than a perfectly laid out, stepwise plan that fails to flex. This way of thinking is simple: *Keep your eye on the prize and deal with what stops you...eliminate what stops you and success will be yours*).

3. What can you do differently to get going again when the inevitable stops do happen and you get stuck? (In other words, if you remain creative, focused, forward thinking, anticipating roadblocks, realistic, tenacious and energized about taking on the obstacles, nothing will ever stop you....ever!)

A life plan, a vision with a realistic path to achievement fixes a lot of problems for everyone. People are a lot easier to deal with if they have a plan they're fired up about. And it's fun to dream a little and put motion to a vision. They may balk at the structure at first but they'll learn and grow into it quickly....because they adapt. It's what they do.

Let's review to be sure you have this: *Design Life Training* is a process that begins with getting a personal vision, anticipating and dealing with what stops you, and learning about the myriad of creative ways YOU have available to beat the obstacles and get the life you want.

Once this life plan evolves in your kid's head (and on paper if you're filling out the *Design Life Blueprint*) their natural *adaptability* kicks in. They will, over time, develop a "felt need" (they will feel the need) to acquire skills like ambition, mental toughness, resilience, grit, determination, patience, and focus to make it happen. The need will drive the

realization, not you preaching about it. At that point you don't have to demand anymore; they will demand it of themselves. And they will seek support and guidance and direction on their own. In this way they own their own vision....and that's the goal of adulthood. Just keep in mind that this happens in their time frame, not yours. Be patient.

This is a very fast explanation of the how the *Design Life Training* program works. What's most important is beginning to change how you ***think about and approach your teen*** as they develop a successful life for themselves. and I would strongly urge you to take our virtual online training ([www.designlifetraining.com](http://www.designlifetraining.com)) to get much more in depth training on this approach. This virtual online training allows you to access guidance, direction and help on your phone, tablet or computer, 24/7 anywhere on earth. You've got some basics now and in a moment I'll go into several of the specific challenges you'll face helping your teen be more successful. If you want to take *Design Life Training* and make sure no stone is left unturned, visit us at [www.designlifetraining.com](http://www.designlifetraining.com) to get enrolled and start immediately.



### III. What is most likely to stop you as you apply this approach?

I'm going to follow steps 2 and 3 of my own design model and make some observations about 1.) what will stop you (and your teen) and 2). give you suggestions to get unstuck. I prefer this *Design Life* approach because in truth most parenting advice over time is cyclical and terribly faddish. I'd prefer answers not tied to what's fashionable or theoretical but rooted in real life human experience. What works. I want you to acquire new ideas that work no matter when you happen to read this. The ideas that follow are timeless and presented in no particular order.

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Neurologists tell us that the human brain isn't fully bloomed out until the age of 25 (give or take). Have you ever noticed how many kids get themselves sorted out and somewhat figured out by 25? It's not really that mysterious given this biological fact. Of course some kids arrive at this plateau earlier than others, some later, but they all get there in time. Be patient and advise your kids not to make too many rash choices before they have their full complement of brains available. Life will look differently to them at that point. Advise them to avoid blunders and stupid mistakes (which they probably won't). Did you?

### **Think big and don't judge or belittle their vision**

Just because you couldn't do something big and bold in your life doesn't mean they can't. Just because you *did* something big and bold and great in your life does not mean they should. Don't stomp on their dreams, ever. EVER....even if you tried the exact same thing and failed, or succeeded. Don't whip your failure or success on them. Got it? Encourage them to bigger, broader, bolder and more fantastic dreams and ideas. Even bigger than you had. Give them the fair chance to take their own shot; to see the future in their own way, especially if it seems silly, futile, ignorant, immature or doomed to you.

*Their life is not yours so don't mess it up with your limitations.* Your job is to open them up. You focus on your life and help them as much as possible with theirs. If you do this properly they will seek out mentors to help them get what they want...and that's a great life skill they should boldly exercise. Encourage it. *Your job is to do what you can to build a vision and a sense readiness and responsibility in them to get help on their own.* Talk up this vision stuff openly in your home. Bring it up often. Be brave in your vision for your future and theirs. Confident. Fearless. That's what they need you to bring to the life they are living right now.

## **Tell them to do something great**

Most teens will never, ever hear someone tell them to do something great. To call them to it. It's a shame but it's the way it is...and in some respects it's no wonder so few teenagers do great things. *Tell your teen to do something great.* Tell them you believe in them; you see it...you see it in them. Trust me on this: you will blow them away if you say this. And they need to hear it...they want to hear it so badly from someone they know and trust.

You. Speak it out loud. Now.

## **The biggest enemy of success**

A pivotal life lesson we all need to learn eventually is this: the biggest enemy of life success is....you. The person in the mirror. Yeah, you.

Your kids need to know that this is the best news of their life! Seriously. They need to have the life success advantage of knowing to catch themselves blaming, finger pointing, accusing, bitching and moaning...and stopping. They need to learn the power of sucking it up, taking responsibility and doing something about their situation, because nobody is going to come and bail them out. These words will set them free. Give them the gift of saying, "The problem is me, and I'm going to fix it."

## **The best decisions they can....**

Sometimes, say sitting in a mall people watching, I'm tempted to think that teens are just so dumb. Yeah! Even me!! Then I get surprised by their sudden maturity, confidence, kindness, insight, good judgment and smarts. They will always surprise you if you let them. But yes, sometimes good decision making can seem hit or miss.

Here's a simple rule that will help you deal with their seeming lack of smarts. You must assume that whenever you see anyone make a decision to do something, they are making the best decision *they think they can make* for themselves given the information they have. It's never really a "dumb" choice, but the best they think they can do with what they're working with. Inexperienced, under-informed and ignorant? Yes. But it is what they think is best for them right now in the moment. Make sense? Don't call them dumb even if their choices are in fact dumb. *Help them get more choices, more experience and wisdom* to fall back on. It's called maturity and it takes time. Nobody is immune from this maturing process, so patience please.

## Level Up

In my *Design Life Training* course I teach a great goal for parents and teens: *Leveling up*. A key motivator in all video games is the desire to rise in levels (talent, points, treasure, etc.). Every wants to "level up."

The same thing goes on in growing successful (achieving life goals) together. Parents need to play up to the next level. So do teens. The levels of parenting are these:

Level 1: parenting (telling your kid what to do and keeping them alive)

Level 2: coaching (expecting your kid to become a player/learning to coach)

Level 3: life success mentor (learning how to impart wisdom/be a sounding board, wisdom source, etc.)

For teens the level-ups are these:

Level 1: kid (waiting for orders, needing to be told what to do)

Level 2: player (assuming responsibility for being coachable)

Level 3: student of life success (getting a mentor and growing strong)

These levels of maturity are going to happen if you want them to happen or not. It's way better though if there is a shared expectation between you and your kids that a better life together happens when you level-up without being forced. For that reason, you need to have a conversation with them. An agreement with them. And understanding with them that this is the direction you are all going. That is your expectation and they can be clear about that. An "up-front agreement" that everyone agrees to, to level up. (You will learn to do this in the *Design Life Training*).

### **Events vs. the stories we tell ourselves**

Whenever any event happens, particularly bad things, we immediately start telling ourselves stories *about* the event. For example you get chewed out by your boss at work and the story becomes, "my boss is an idiot and I'm great" or "I'm so misunderstood" or "life sucks" etc. You get the idea. Events and the stories we tell. They are usually very different.

Teens are *really prone* to doing this. Just listen to them as they explain the problems or troubles they have...it will no doubt be heavy with complaints, blaming, excuses, self pity, shirking responsibility, thoughts of retaliation, getting even....and on and on. Those are some of the tell-tales of a story out of control.

Do your kids the favor by separating the lessons they gain from an event from the story they tell themselves. Simply ask them, "Is that an event or a story you're telling yourself?" For example your son gets dumped by a girl, or visa versa and they're crushed, they think life as they know it is over. Keep them focused on the event ("Guys and girls dump and pick up one another every day. It says nothing about you except that you're in the game. What can you do differently next time?", and so on.). If they begin drifting back into the story (which they will), keep them focused on the matter-of-fact nature of the event and don't let them get away with sucking you into the drama (the story) with them. Make sense?

In most every incidence the story becomes a much bigger problem than the actual event that launched it. That is because they assume the story is true, and in reality it is not. It's just a story made up to explain something they don't understand. You must do your kid the favor of pointing out, explaining and separating in their minds the difference between their experience and a made up explanation. Stay on your toes to make that distinction in the fast moving pace of their everyday lives. (In the *Design Life Training* we cover several ways to do this effectively).

### **Don't join their misery**

Stories can create great misery. *Don't join them.* Learn to ask coaching questions, even if your heart is breaking for their tough situation and emotional pain. "What are you gonna do?", "Are you open to ideas?", "What are you comparing this to?" are great all-purpose coaching reply to many of the challenges your kid will face. If they are really deep into the misery cycle they may not even hear it, and may just want you to commiserate with them. A little bit of joining the misery is alright as long as you don't get sucked into the story and believe it too. Always bring the conversation back around to the central exit point: "What are *YOU* going to do?" Be prepared to listen, bounce ideas around, share experiences, laugh, cry....and move on. Be with them in their misery but don't *join* them ("Oh God yes it's horrible, but I'm hearing a different story...."). Coach them through it. Listen, don't join. Make sense?

### **Confidence**

I get asked about confidence a lot. The word choice people use when talking about this suggests that they think confidence exists in their kids like an internal organ. And so many parents think it's up them to "put it in them" or something. That's not the way confidence works. *Confidence is generated, as needed.* The question is not "does my kid have enough confidence?" but "does my kid know how to create confidence when they need it?"

Rather than go into how to teach your kids to create confidence I will refer you to short ebook I wrote entitled *The Trigger Loop: How to Activate Confidence, Courage and Grit on Demand*. This is a simple process using my MindRev™ training to help your kid gain more active and successful control over their own runaway mind. Fear, insecurity, hesitation and freezing at critical moments are feelings our brains make outside our awareness, and we too often just participate in those bad feelings without thinking to stop it (or knowing how). With the right education they can learn to create new power, self-control and total confidence. (Download a copy of this ebook now at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16lfMByxSokzYQrRrAQdti8zH2-M2D0fl/view?usp=sharing> ). Learning to do this sort of thinking exercise is a gift you should make available to your teen.

## Self Esteem

Self-esteem is a completely uncomplicated thing. Self-esteem is the good feeling you have about yourself when you're competent and good at things that are important to you. *You can't give or get that with words.* You waste your breath if you think self-esteem comes from praise. If you want your kids to have self-esteem, ask them what they want to be good at...what do they value?... and help them get it. I refer to back to the free *Trigger Loop* book offer of the previous section. Teach them how they can teach themselves to skillfully respond to the exciting challenges of their own lives and self-esteem will be born....without you constantly chattering to them about how great they are. Self-esteem comes from life skill. Position them to help themselves to the buffet of life skills available to them today.

And another quick thing: when you do have the occasion to complement your kid (which is great and you should), focus your praise on *their effort*, not the scoreboard, the grade card, the championship award, their beauty or angelic gifts. They can easily tell the difference between what they've done that's truly great and the platitudes of their parents



(remember they're abstract thinkers now). Here's how you phrase it: avoid "you're such a bright and shining talent" and aim for, "I'm so proud of how hard you worked, how you focused, how you spent so much time and effort, how you stuck with it..." Get the idea? Self-esteem of born of effort they feel good about, so praise that.

## Disciplining Misbehavior

You need to do this at some point, even with much older teens. Though I prefer to focus my comments on building your life together after all these "discipline years" are over, it's part of the parenting game you are in right now so let me give you some tips that will help.

Keep 2 things in mind. First, little kids (pre-teen) operate on a very simple cognitive rule that they run in their heads over and over and over. The rule is: *Push till you're stopped*. That's it. Over and over. If you get stopped by a parent, a barrier, a time out, a spanking...go back and push till your stopped. Keep pushing. It's what kids do, like little robots. Over and over, until they are stopped.

Teens do a version of this, right? But they are way more sophisticated (abstract thinkers). They play with boundaries, justify, lie, hide.....they all do it. Your job is simple: Decide on the limit and enforce it. And what are they going to do? Defy it. It's what they've done their whole lives. It's just what they do, so you need to be ready and try not to be surprised.

Which brings me to my second point: most rule-breaking in teens is because they've figured out that nothing will really happen if they overstep the line. Most kids have a number in their heads: the number of times they can defy you before you will actually do anything. Your kid has your number! So here's the rule: most misbehavior occurs because your kid does not believe you will do what you say, when you say you're going to take action. They have your number and you're not believable.

I would suggest you become believable. Sometime, somewhere you must write out a list of offenses you won't tolerate, you must together decide on the discipline for not complying and the "teen timeout" penalty. It's common to restrict privileges you pay for....phones, computers, electricity, hot water (seriously....5 minute showers) and so on. It does not matter what it is as much as you being absolutely firm on enforcing it. AKA *becoming believable*. When you say a certain consequence it must happen with col' regularity.

With that list and an upfront/posted agreement with your kid about the rules and will happen if...you can approach discipline with a matter of fact cool; calm, focused, wise and matter-of-fact, according to that pre-arranged and agreed upon plan, and with utter lack of emotion. Detach your emotions from the outcome you're about to enforce. "Break the rules, get his outcome" (or punishment if you like). "Do this, get that" (let me repeat again that these "outcomes" are agreed about ahead of time so nobody is surprised or confused or feeling ripped off when you lower the inevitable boom). Make sense?

Hey now listen...I've raised teens. Sometimes you lose it. Seriously lose it. Try to avoid being "that parent" here by giving yourself the advantage of cool down time. Do the "3R's". The 3R's are "retreat, rethink, respond". If you are really pissed, give yourself a timeout so that you can retreat, rethink your options or get input from others, then respond with the words and actions you choose in a better state of mind. Retreat, for moments, hours or a day if you need it. During that time rethink what you're going to do. Then respond. The 3 R's.

And as the fire of your anger cools, remember to put your passion into their plan, and make discipline just a necessity of doing the parenting business. Nobody ever died or got their self-esteem decimated from agreed upon, posted, enforced discipline.

## **Don't complain about.....**

I heard some great advice once that really helped me and might help you too. The advice was “Don't complain about the things you permit.” Ugh. At the time I got received that advice I was in fact complaining about something that I was permitting. And I had to have a talk with myself. It went something like this: “Listen Billy: either you shut up about this situation or make some rules that change what is going on.” It was tough advice but it made all the difference.

Don't complain about what you permit. Be strong. Set the standard without apology. It's your job. It's why destiny gave you the power you have. Don't be shy or afraid of your parental power. Whether or not you feel nice or mean about it. It's real. Don't fear it; use it with certainty and without apology.

Make adapting to you and your boundaries a high priority for your teen. You read that right. You adapted to people, right? It's what humans do. And they will need to adapt to you and everybody else *for the rest of their lives*. Adaptation to others is learned so don't you dare apologize about it. We all have to learn to use our adaptability and it starts with them adapting to you. This adaptability should include rules about the use of computers and phones, game playing, curfews, drinking at parties and drugs. Make rules especially about alcohol and drug use at parties, driving in the same car with drinking friends, etc. Set up a “Free call” policy and verbally agree with your teen that you will drive to pick up *any kid* anytime, anywhere, under any condition with no questions asked about the alcohol or drug related situation (till the next day). It works.

## **Turn bad to good**

This is one of the most useful skills any human being can have, and you can teach it starting now. It's actually a skill born of a mindset: a mindset that says “we can make something good out of whatever happens.” We spend a lot of time in the *Design Life*

*Training* talking about how to generate this, but in reality it happens when one person, just one person introduces the idea in the midst of a setback or a problem. The question is always the same:

“What can we do with this?”

“How can we have fun fixing this?”

“How can we turn this into something useful for everyone?”

These are all examples of the thinking required to turn a bad into good. Insist on asking these questions yourself, and model it for your teens. Believe me: they have never, ever heard this before and it would be great if you were the model for it. There aren't many better gifts you could give them. Don't waste a good crisis but learn the art of the turnaround. (Besides, some of the best experiences of my life have been the silver linings of big, BIG problems. Get to those silver linings by thinking and talking about turnarounds).

### **The Golden Connector**

I know a lot of parent's that consider themselves great communicators. They measure themselves by their ability to constantly chatter with their kids, their involvement, their great wisdom and diamonds of life knowledge they constantly shower on them. You know the type.

Only one thing is missing. Can you guess? *They don't listen.* And get this in your head: teens don't care what you think, *they only care that you care.* And you show them you care by listening. Listen to them, hear them out, repeat back to them what they just said, ask them questions and shut up, plumb them for what they think and listen and remember. Take notes if you must. Be interested...not interesting. If you have to get a “talking stick” (or something that you pass back and forth between you and your kid and the only one that can talk is the one holding the stick. It's fun and you might hear

something you never heard before because you were too busy thinking what you were going to say). Your ears are the golden connectors.

Download your FREE copy of *"The 99 Conversations Game"* I created for the purpose of opening up conversations. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19AVfum-JcvNj2HLACeA58uuP3kCg3fh9/view?usp=sharing>

### **Happiness from within**

One of the greatest bits of wisdom I ever received came from the Stoic philosopher Epicetus:

"To the extent you are able, find your happiness within."

One of the roadside bombs our kids must negotiate on the trail of life is this incessant focus on external things. These kids (all of us really) are peppered... bombarded...assaulted by electronic media, screens, sights, sounds, noise....it's a barrage of sensory input constantly drawing our attention away from anything quiet, internal, enduring. Life becomes a very fast pan across the senses....making everything a blur. Life becomes a constant, nearly unstoppable acceleration of the sense.

Encourage your kids take an electronic holiday; a time out. A respite to think and go internal. Do your best to fight against the implicit message they hear everyday that they aren't good enough unless they're winning the latest game or have the newest clothes or best phone. Fight against the false promise that happiness lies outside themselves in the next greatest *whatever*. Teach them the value of taking time to find something inside of themselves that they can love. This is no easy chore, but I think you'd have to agree that is sounds right...and to be honest, awesome. Start with yourself. Do it because nobody else in their world is going to.

## Complications

It's a fool's errand to try to cover all the possible complications that could and probably will come into your life. We're all old enough to know about curveballs in life and as much as we hate the thought, curveballs is what we often get. Curveballs are complications like addiction, illness, suicide, divorce, bad solo parenting arrangements, lying, uncovered secrets and other trust-killing events. Life is hard enough without all this crap, but it happens, right?

There are no simple solutions to some of life's real complications. So, I won't try to fool you. What I will tell you is that after some of the very bad surprises I've endured I've learned the value....no...the absolute *necessity* of learning to fight weary. Stopping is not an option. So if you are in these difficult circumstances (or anticipate that you might be), lower your focus. Get good at taking one problem at a time and not allowing yourself to be dragged into a serious funk by the lineup of pressing problems. One at a time. Patiently working your life. Inch by inch. Fighting on....weary if need be, but still fighting. Sometimes that's all you can ask of yourself. As have millions and millions and millions of others that have come before you. There are brighter days ahead. Keep your composure, focus on a goal, get the help and comfort of a good friend or confidante....and fight like hell.

And don't forget that an important person is watching you: your kid. It does not take a lot to impress them for a lifetime. A lifetime....think about that. Life is a long, long road and you are going to know your teenager for many, many years. Decades. And you will have time to laugh and cry and remember these times. And you know what? No matter how good or bad they are they will be remembered as some of the greatest moments of your life. So enjoy them, to the extent you can. Laugh, cry, kick scream, pray....and squeeze the life out of every second....together.

# My Design Life Blueprint

“Designing your life is easy to do. But it’s easy not to do. Design it yourself or it will be designed for you”

## I. “What Do I Want?”

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

## II. “What Will Stop Me From Getting It?”

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

## III. “What Am I Prepared To Do About The Things That Will Stop Me?”

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

## Directions for the *Design Life Blueprint*

Very few people are doing what you are doing. Most people have not been told that a great life deserves a plan. So you are at a great advantage. Let's press it.

This plan is broken into 3 easy to follow components.

### #1: "What do I want?"

Begin with your vision for yourself. Don't worry if it's not completely clear to you, just make a start. Watch the video on John Goddard and his famous life list on [www.iwantabiglife.com](http://www.iwantabiglife.com). Dream bigger and bigger. See as far off in the future as you can and think big. Never be afraid of thinking big. Write down everything that comes to mind and don't edit it (leave something out because it sounds too crazy or impossible. All impossible things start off sounding crazy). Make sure to include at least 2 or 3 really impossible things...and watch the *Alice in Wonderland* video on [www.iwantabiglife.com](http://www.iwantabiglife.com).

### #2: "What will stop me from getting it?"

Get to know yourself and what stops you as you reach for your goals. This part is the most often neglected step in life planning, and for my money it is BY FAR the most important thing. Having goals and dreams is so important but you need to get to know what stops you; both seen things like blaming, bad attitude, laziness and unseen things like not finishing what you start, hesitation in clutch moments, procrastination, fear, etc.. Once you begin to assemble a list of things that stop you, you'll notice that the list doesn't change much over the course of your life. That's a good thing because you can normally boil it down to 3-5 things that are changeable. Get a program to effectively change those things (take the training!) and attaining your goals becomes much more automatic. Not completely automatic, but close.

### #3: "What am I prepared to do about the things that stop me?"

You need to address the things that stop you. There is nothing you can put on that list that can't be fixed in one form or another. And it's well worth your time, however long it takes, to stay focused on fixing those blocks and getting on with your life. So get after it!

*You are awesome.* And remember.....Life is Big!



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Bill Beausay is the former Director of Research and Development at the Academy of Sports Psychology, author of nearly 20 books including 3 national best sellers *Boys!*, *Girls!* and *Teenage Boys, What's Possible*, *True Greatness*, *The Sender* and more, with combined worldwide circulation over 1 million copies. He is the creator of MindRev™ Labs and Design Life Training. Bill did his Doctoral work at the University of Toledo and spent 10 years in a professional clinical practice before becoming a writer and international speaker on how to do more, make more and be more. He has spoken for dozens of Fortune 500 firms and has been featured on radio, newspapers, television, and magazines coast-to-coast. Bill is a pilot, scuba diver, skier, adventurer and grandfather of 9.



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