

Adolescent Zone Enter with Caution: Author Dr.N.Raj Mohan Ph.D

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Synopsis of the book:

Chapter One

Parenting is a response to oneself AND to the child. This is a truth seldom leveraged. When this truth is realized by parents, parenting becomes easier. We will have to agree that parenting means, to be in **continuous dilemma**. 'Should I intervene or let the child learn from mistakes', so on and so forth. There are no readymade answers. Parenting, an art, is best learned through trial and error, but this is sure to get the desired result only if parents relate to their children, especially adolescents. Relating to them is key. The parent who relates to the child, wins.

Chapter 2

Many of us pass on the dilemma to our children as well. **Children observe parents more than we realize**. Conflicts, in whom to follow when it comes to values etc confuse the growing child, as he or she, witnesses his parents to say one thing and do the contrary. For an adolescent this kind of dilemma would have a deterring effect because a lack of a strong model has the potential to make the children weak – emotionally, psychologically and ethically.

Adolescents undergo a lot of conflicts within themselves - Independence Vs dependence, Peer group & popularity, Affiliation Vs achievement, and Self doubt. Although this is a natural process, they require parents to understand and empathise with their predicaments.

Chapter 3

Wrong **parental expectations** can lead to a strained relationship and eventually a 'wrong' personality of the young adult. Parents need to understand their own expectations and where they come from. Is it from a dissatisfied past? Or is the expectation truly for the development of the child? Today's parents need to understand the difference between pleasure and pressures of life, fear and love etc. Because these dimensions are usually confused with each other and parents with this ambiguity fail to reach
Their children.

Chapter 4

Listening to children is different from 'hearing' to what they are saying. Weird but true. Many of us hear but do not listen due to various impediments. Adolescents need not only the physical presence of their parents, but more so, they need the psychological presence. There are various interesting communicating styles that are described in this chapter that can throw light on how to listen and relate effectively to our children. Expressions are so very crucial for this parental relationship and to the positive development of our children.

Chapter 5

Success of teaching is whether or as parents we are able to reach our children. Are we merely **teaching them or are we also reaching them** in the process? When we reach our children, we will be able to understand their needs. And in understanding this, we will also realize that effective parenting is nothing but making our children **autonomous**. This chapter deals with the importance of emotions and parenting styles. The question, whether or not we are developing autonomous young adults leads us to the very reason for this book. Are we leader parents? If not, how do I become one?

Chapter 6

A parental leader means a lot to our adolescent children. It is something that cannot be compromised with. Why is it that parents have different roles to play at different stages of the child? How is this related to becoming a parental leader? These are some of the questions pondered in this chapter. Parental leadership models suggested in this chapter will help parents primarily in the areas of their appropriate leadership styles and 'reward & punishment' continuum.

Due to low membership in the family, today, children closely watch parent's every step, their style of functioning, their likes and dislikes, the way they communicate etc, irrespective of its effectiveness. These 'Leadership' styles have a significant impact on one's parenting and the resultant growth of their children.

Dr.N.Raj Mohan on Parenting Adolescents. (conflict Spots)

Conflict Spots:

Parents must become aware that all children do have problems like adults. This insight itself will help us to handle children effectively. Most of us do not accept that our children have problems. We dismiss this simple fact for two major reasons:

1. Children at this age can not have problems
2. Why should they have problems when we provide everything for our children?

This is a myth to be denied. Children have their own world and their own conflicts. For a four year old child sharing her toy with another child is an issue. Not sensitizing this, many parents respond from different need. We recognize the need of other children by ignoring our own child. We persuade our children to give the toy to the other children. For us, denial of giving the toy is social in-appropriateness. Especially, this would become more complicated when the other child's parents are around.

Thus adolescents do have conflicts. They are more and varied. It could be related to:

- family values
- friendship and loyalty
- entertainment & freedom
- studies
- love & sex
- Behaviour of parents and other elders
- peer group influence and
- family expectations etc.,

The above list is only illustrative and not exhaustive. I have culled out a few important conflict areas and its dynamics from the above. They are

Independence Vs dependence

Affiliation Vs achievement

Self doubt

Peer group & popularity

Dr.N.Raj Mohan on Parenting Adolescents. (Money or Harmony)

Money or Harmony

In India, we are very rapidly moving towards 'Individualistic' pattern of life from 'Pluralistic' society. Be it family or social structure. The Joint family system is consciously breaking and being discouraged among the present generation. Children are tutored to be suspicious, protective and self-centered. Various reasons are attributed to the deviation from the joint family system and one of the major reasons is financial constraints. There is nothing wrong in achieving economic independence as long as the processes are meaningful.

Being independent is being self reliant. The methods and models advocated and prevalent today are very unhealthy and dangerous. Neither this will help an individual nor the family nor the country.

Children are put in to lot of stress to score marks to get in to colleges (read commercial establishments). Thanks to the IT revolution and abundant job opportunities!(?) Educational Institutions have understood this need and converted their places in to placement agencies. In this process we (parents) have collaborated with these institutions and have 'robotized the students.

There is less room for understanding, sharing, caring, collaboration and bonding. Children do get attuned to this life and they also believe that money is the only motivator in life. People whose DNA constitutes more achievement orientation reach to the top and the rest hobble and limp.

Achievement does not come as a free bee. It has a price tag. It costs heavy for those who ignore their personal health and relating. Please read me correctly: I am not against achievement per se. My pressing concern is, 'Are our children oriented towards a holistic development?' Parents need to reflect seriously 'what life means to them?' This reflection will surely offer simple insights for happy and meaningful living.

These reflections can be shared with our children to find out what life means to them. It is of utmost importance to create a platform where a child needs to be trained to understand and appreciate holistic approach towards life. They should understand that money is important but money is not everything. ***In search of money one can not lose harmony with in.***

Dr.N.Raj Mohan on Parenting Adolescents. (Culinary Communication)

What style do we use?

You would have witnessed situations when parents are experiencing anxiety or anger they don't talk:

but They bark!

It is not your words - it's your emotion which matters.

When we speak, we express not only words but also our emotions. In fact your words will be understood with the background of the emotions only. Emotions will have an overriding effect on words. Take for an example, your child asks you to come to his school on the eve of the Carnival. And you say in a huff that 'you have no time and you have a better job to do'. The child will tend to pick up your irritation and your non-caring attitude rather than understanding your busy schedule. When children, especially adolescents ask you to come to school they actually mean to say that **they need you at school more emotionally than physically.**

It would be interesting to note few communication styles of our parents.

Onion: When the followers of this style talk, you may see either they cry or the children cry. It is like peeling an onion in front of your eyes. Every statement will be loaded with emotions. Some times, like onion, after peeling what you see is nothing-a logical vacuum. Not much substance for emotional extremism.

Chilly : It is always Hot. The listener will always feel that they have bitten a chilly. It is a shower of oral abuse on the child. They are very critical and show poor recognition **even** for deserving acts of their children. They are conditioned to spit venom on their children.

Sweet and sour: Parents of this style are either 'Ambivalent or Sarcastic'. They are so sweet at times and unbelievably become rough later. They themselves are not clear how to treat their adolescent children. Some time they say 'you are grown up' and other times they say you are a kid. It is a conscious manipulative exercise or poor self worth of parents. But children tend to get confused notes in this process.

Parents also become sweet when they expect the children to listen to them and say 'yes' when the later want to say 'no'. This will make children to hide their feeling and fake it especially in the case of authority figures. This ambivalent attitude confuses the child and retards their growth. The sarcastic parents talk sweetly but there will be gap between what they say and what they mean.

Honey: Disciple (s) of this style knows the essence of communication and they also know how to get things done by children. They are genuine, consistent and non- manipulative. They choose Thiruvalluvar's Kaniyiruppa kai kavarnthatrru (When fruit is available why choose the raw one?)

Dr.N.Raj Mohan on Parenting Adolescents. (Crafting Career)

I would be happy now if you would have gained understanding on how parents tend to influence children and its impact on them. Influencing is a great art and all of us are doing this everyday with others. One of the effective ways of influencing your child in their decision making process is 'facilitating' them in what ever they do. Every Individual has innate qualities to excel in certain fields. Some people can paint beautifully but cannot carry a tune. Others are good at talking to people but slow at paperwork. These basic differences among people are important factors in providing them satisfaction and also meaning to their life. Overlooking these factors, most of the parents, adults and the children choose or are forced to choose wrong careers resulting in wastage of time, effort money and finally life itself.

Latha, a medical college student of Chennai had secured high marks in plus two and wanted to pursue Engineering as her career. But her entire family, who were doctors and who ran a hospital, insisted her to choose medicine. She fulfilled her family's desire but found it extremely difficult to cope up with her studies. She had informed her parents about her struggle. But her family did not like to see her as anything other than a doctor. As Latha's plea of not being able to continue medicine fell on deaf years, she went in to depression.

It is time to realize that one will excel in the career she / he is good at

Facilitation is not thrusting our desire on them without realizing their caliber. There are families who spend time with their children to understand their desire and aptitude and help them to become more aware to make choices; choices of their own but yet with appropriate guidance.

Every day, we see parents coming to our career counseling center (BODHI) with their children to choose their right career. In this process they reap great advantages.

As a result of this informed process, we have seen children owning up their choices & future. Chances of blaming it on parents become minimal. When children own up their choices they tend to work harder and achieve better results.

May I suggest you to 'Lead them to Lead'