

Read This Book or You're Grounded: A Secret Guide to Surviving at Home

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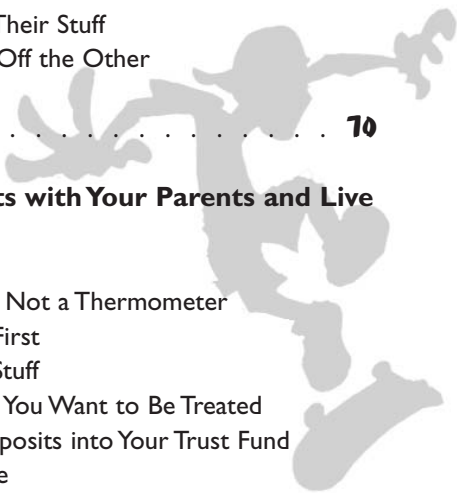
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# EYES IN THE BACK OF



(MYTHS  
ABOUT  
PARENTS  
YOU'RE  
BETTER OFF  
FORGETTING)

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# THEIR HEADS



**I** spend a lot of my time talking to parents. In fact, I travel to cities across America almost every week trying to explain YOU to them. I do this in a seminar called *Understanding Your Teenager*. Hey, don't laugh. I actually do it for a living!

I often start the seminar by debunking myths about teenagers. One of them is called *The Myth of the Teenage Werewolf*. This myth, simply stated, is the belief that all teenagers go bad. No kidding. Some people think that when kids become teenagers—unless they're locked in their bedrooms and given



*Here's an idea: Ask your parents to pull out their high school Yearbooks, then ask them to sit down and explain why they thought those goofy looking hairdos and ridiculous clothes looked so cool. Or, next time you see grandma, ask her what your mom or dad did to give her all that gray hair. You'll probably come to the frightening realization that your parents remind you a lot of you.*

massive doses of Ritalin—they automatically turn into uncontrollable, rebellious monsters who wreak havoc on society, destroy families, and ruin their lives forever.

Sound like you? I didn't think so.

But a lot of people believe this myth. Why? Maybe they believe it because that's all they hear. So much media coverage about teenagers shows juvenile delinquency, school violence, teens on drugs, teen gangs, teens and sex, teens driving under the influence, teen suicide, and every other kind of teen problem. People start to believe that's how all teens behave. Never mind that the vast majority of teenagers stay out of serious trouble or that most of the bad stuff going on in the world involves adults,

not kids. When people are constantly bombarded with bad news about teens, they sometimes paint all of you with the same stereotypical brush.

But here's the real problem. If your parents buy into the *Myth of the Teenage Werewolf*, they'll probably treat you and your friends as if it were true. They'll trust you less, give you less freedom, and worry about you a lot more than they need to.

Not fair, is it? But that's what myths and stereotypes do. They make life tough for the group being stereotyped. It's hard enough to be a teenager without everybody automatically assuming you're going to be a major problem. That just makes you want to live down to everybody's expectations. But you don't really want to do that.

Well, a few myths about parents need to be debunked too. You know all teenagers are not alike. Well, neither are all parents, and you shouldn't lump them all together as if they were. Parents get a lot of bad publicity around the school lunch table and in the popular media. If you buy into that, you'll mess up the relationship you and your folks have even more. Let's start by getting rid of some of that "myth-information" about parents as much as possible. Only then will your situation at home improve.

## - - - - - "PARENTS ARE YOUR ENEMY"

We may as well begin with the queen mother of myths about parents. While parents (also known as *homo sapiens painus in neckus*) can sometimes make life difficult, they are not your enemy by a long shot. If your parents are on the attack, think of it as friendly fire.

Yes, they do attack. They threaten, criticize, humiliate, nag, accuse, interrogate, and punish. They lob scud missiles like, "When are you going to start acting your age?" or "Can't you do anything right?" These questions may cause you to retaliate with a few dumb bombs of your own like, "You can't make me!" or "Get out of my life!" And then it's Desert Storm all over again. Your house

becomes a battleground.

But that still doesn't make your parents the enemy. Trust me on this one. Later, I'll explain why your parents get on your case so much, but for now, keep in mind that conflict is not that unusual between teenagers and parents (duh). That's because you are growing up and seeking more independence and freedom, and that scares your parents. They worry because they know they are losing control of you. They don't always know how to react to this, and quite frankly, neither do you. So you engage them in a few skirmishes. But that's why I've written this book—to help you learn some survival strategies to deal with parents who are sometimes their *own* worst enemies.

As you get older, you'll realize your parents are not enemies, but allies. They love you more than anyone else on earth. The strange thing is that sometimes the people who love each other the most get on each other's nerves the most. Think about it. If someone you don't know criticizes you, you don't really care, but if a family member or close friend does, it really hurts.

Remember, most of the hassles you're experiencing at home right now are temporary. When you finally move out and start living on your own, you'll probably have a great relationship with your parents. Most people do.

But what you want is a better relationship with your parents right now. After all, your relationship with your parents is probably the longest, deepest, and most meaningful one you'll ever have with anybody. Your parents brought you into the world. They cared for you when you couldn't care for yourself. They gave up a lot for you when you couldn't give anything back. Someday you'll want to be close to them. Maybe you don't feel that way now, and that's okay. Just know that they're not your enemy. They're on your side, and if you look hard enough, more often than not you'll find them cheering you on no matter what you do.

## **"PARENTS ARE CLUELESS" - - - - -**

If you believe this myth, you've been watching way too much TV. Helpful hint: The Simpsons are only cartoon characters, and

most of those other TV families exist only in scriptwriters' warped minds. Right now it may be popular to portray parents as bumbling idiots who have to be rescued by their clever, resourceful, and extremely bright children—but come on, give your parents a break! They may not be rocket scientists, but they probably know all they need to know to do a good job of raising you.

On top of that, they have a whole lot more life experience than you do. I guarantee they've learned a few things about life that you might want to learn yourself someday if you'll only pay attention.

Of course, you may believe you're a more highly developed life form than your technology-challenged parents. How could they possibly understand the complexities of the universe when they can't even tell a CD-ROM from a DVD?

Okay, so they grew up in the dark ages. But keep in mind that it was your parents' generation (and even some before theirs) that came up with all the cool gadgets and gizmos that make your life so advanced and interesting today. One of these days, your kids will benefit from *your* brilliance, all the while thinking you're about as intelligent as a stump.

Don't underestimate your parents' intelligence. Clueless as they may seem about the anatomy of a PS2 or X-Box, they'll get a lot smarter in a few years. A wise man once said, "At 16, I couldn't believe how ignorant my parents were. But at 21, I couldn't believe how much they had learned in only five years."

## - - - "PARENTS DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU"

Actually, your parents probably understand you better than anyone. Who has the credentials to understand you better than your mom or dad? Who's spent more time with you than your parents? Who knows your life and family history better than your parents? If your parents don't understand you, then nobody does!

*"But my parents don't remember what it was like to be a teenager. They've been adults so long, they have no idea what I'm going*

through.”

That may be true. But your parents were teenagers, and they do remember what it was like to be one. Their memory is just selective. They remember (1) the highlights and (2) the low-lights—the really good stuff and the really, uh, bad stuff (which they never tell you about.) They could remember a lot more, but they’re too busy trying to be the age they are right now to spend a lot of time living in the past.

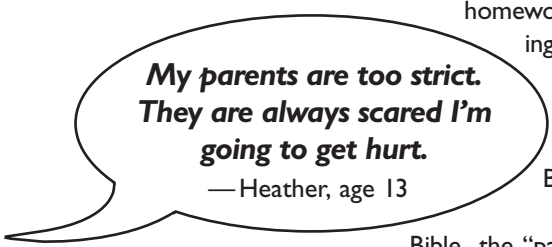
That’s why they sometimes act like they don’t remember anything at all. Or they say dumb things like “*When I was your age I had to walk twenty miles to school everyday...in the snow...with no shoes...uphill...both ways...fighting off dinosaurs...*”

If you really believe your parents have no idea what it’s like to be a teenager, take the initiative to enlighten them. Tell them what’s going on in *your* life, and before long, they’ll be experts!

## “PARENTS DON’T WANT YOU TO HAVE ANY FUN” - - - - -

Yeah, right. They want you to be miserable—just like they were when they were teenagers. You’ve heard all their stories. They spent their entire teen years cleaning their bedrooms, doing

homework by candlelight, listening to “good” music, milking cows, plowing fields, helping old ladies across the street, reading the Bible, et cetera, et cetera.



***My parents are too strict.  
They are always scared I’m  
going to get hurt.***

—Heather, age 13

Speaking of the Bible, the “parents don’t want me to have any fun” myth probably got its start back in the Old Testament when the first teenager in history (whose name was Cain) thought he’d take his brother Abel out for a little fun in the backyard (see Genesis 4:8). And that is the last we hear of dear little brother Abel.

Here’s the problem. You want to have fun, but your parents want you to be safe. Sometimes those two wants are in direct

conflict with each other. Parents aren't against fun so much as they're against having you be the lead story on the evening news. They know from experience that some fun can be dangerous, illegal, unhealthy, or all three. Every time they hear or read about some kid who gets killed in a car crash on the way home from a party where alcohol was served, they imagine you in that car. That's why they sometimes act as if they don't want you to have any fun. They really don't want you dead.

There's nothing wrong with having fun, but it's possible to have fun without making your parents worry half to death. Maybe you think safe fun is boring and very uncool. But wait until you have kids of your own (if you live that long). You won't want them to get their kicks playing in the freeway either. If your idea of fun is putting yourself or others in danger, your parents are right to stop you from doing that. That's how they prove they really love you.

Have all the fun you can have. Even the Bible encourages you to do that (check out Ecclesiastes 11:9). But for heaven's sake (and yours, too) make sure it's the kind that will pass muster with Mom and Dad. Go out of your way to let them know exactly what you'll be doing. Make a big deal out of just how safe and sensible it is! Give them details about where you'll be, who'll be there, what precautions have been taken, and when you'll be home. The more information you give them, the better. If you'll communicate with your folks and help them get what *they* want (no worries), then you'll get what *you* want (lots of fun!)

## - - - - - "PARENTS ARE SLAVE DRIVERS"

So your parents treat you like an indentured servant? They force you to toil your life away doing the stupid chores and boring jobs *they* don't want to do? Well, unless you live on a farm at the turn of the century (not this century—the *LAST* one), it is highly unlikely this myth is true. Not too many parents out there really produce children just to have a cheap labor force to plow the fields, milk the cows, harvest the crops, or even take out the trash. Parents no longer view their offspring as hired hands or