

# How to Raise a Man

## Workbook

Self-reflection worksheets to help you  
have a meaningful and connected  
relationship with your son.

  
Megan de Beyer

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# Introduction

**“We want our teenager to be a man with commitment, compassion and courage, guided by a core inner strength and confidence.”**

Hello Mothers,

These worksheets come from my book *How to Raise a Man: The Modern Mother's Guide to Parenting her Teenage Son* and my 'Strong Mothers - Strong Sons' course.

When my sons were about 15 and 16, I found myself in conversations with other moms: What had happened to our sweet boys? The ones we cuddled and who thought we were the best?

It seemed as if, overnight, our sons had become hypercritical and rejecting. Our boys were responding to us in monosyllables and sometimes with contempt - if they responded at all. Where was the little boy who couldn't wait for us to get home to spend time together, to hug and tumble on the bed and read books?

I was a psychologist who'd worked with children and parents for years, and I was as baffled and hurt as the other moms were. I suggested that I put together a workshop where we could try to understand what was going on, to find a path that would strengthen our relationships with our sons, while still holding true to the values of our homes.

That was over a decade ago. The workshop became a course and began its own journey - to every major city in South Africa, to California, the UK and Australia. I've also been invited to take it to Ghana, Namibia, Zambia and Botswana. Part of its success is due to the programme being built around questions that mothers asked me at that first workshop, and have asked me since.

But the programme also incorporates insights from older teen boys. This adds another dimension that grounds the advice and information given in absolute authenticity. For more than a decade, at every school I have visited, I have interviewed a group of senior boys in their final year (generally aged 17 or 18). So I know what boys think, do and want! From these interviews, it became clear that some things needed unpacking:

1. Mothers don't understand the male teen process and the developmental phases ALL boys will go through. Only when you understand this can you place your teen's behaviour in context.
2. How you mother a teenager has to be very different from how you mother a little boy. Clearly, what had worked when they were little is not working now, and will set you on a collision course.



Megan de Beyer has a Master's degree in Psychology and an MSc in Holistic Science (UK). She is trained in relationship and family therapy as well as mindfulness, meditation and yoga. She has facilitated many successful and well-subscribed Mothers and Sons courses at every independent boy's school in South Africa as well as in Australia, California and the UK.

3. Mothers are women and not men. The unfolding of masculinity involves different rites of passage and hormones than becoming a woman.
4. Mothers are either blaming themselves or blaming their teen for conflict.
5. Mothers need more self-awareness, and they need a philosophy of parenting that they believe in.

Mothering a teen can be an anxious time. We are preparing our boys to live in the world, to create a life and to find a space for themselves. We do our best to help them develop their personalities, their skills and their wholeness. We see ourselves as guardians of their lives and spirits and hearts. We want to be sure that we have handed over all the skills, knowledge and love that will help them move forward in their own lives. We want to be sure that our relationship with them will be strong enough so that, when they go into the world, their love will bring them back (now and again, or as often as possible!) to the family, or at least to their foundational values.

These instincts are right: If he values his relationship with you, his relationship with his father and with his home, it is in his mind when he is making those impulsive, sometimes unsafe, decisions.

If the shutdown hasn't happened to you yet, it will. It will make you angry. It will break your heart. And you will feel like you've lost him. But there is something the hundreds of senior boys I've spoken to all say, and it is the most important gift I can give you:

Whatever is going on in your home right now, no matter how challenging, no matter how difficult, no matter how

much your son seems to be turning on you or not speaking to you, know that he loves you with all his heart. You are the beacon of unconditional love for him, and you are one of the most important anchors in his life. Yes, even in those moments when you are standing there thinking, 'What have I done wrong? What's going on here? How can I improve?'

'Strong Mothers - Strong Sons' was never a 'perfect mother' course. Far from it. It is about discovering yourself in your role as a mother to a teen boy. The prime principle of the course and my book is to teach you how to show up, and in what manner to show up, with as much openness and availability as you can muster amid the realities of life, the chores that you have and the work that you have to complete.

All the information and exercises in the course and my book are there to help you find ways to have a deeper connection, so that you are able to create a sanctuary from the world out there.

It may be hard for you to imagine that the day will arrive when you are not stretching yourself to your limits to cover all the costs - emotional as well as financial - that raising boys require. The time between ages 13 and 18 moves incredibly fast. That's just five birthdays! If your son has already turned 14, you're down to four. We have to make the most of the time we have with them. And, as I realised all those years ago, parenting a teenager is very different from mothering a little boy.

These self-reflection worksheets are some of the exercises I ask moms to do, whether they are on the course, reading my book to do or doing the online 'How to Raise a Man' course (which can be watched at [teachable.com](http://teachable.com)). They are an important part of the programme and supplement the courses.

If you wish to dive deeper, I recommend that you read my book 'How to Raise a Man - the Modern Mother's Guide to Parenting her Teenage Son'. It is published by Penguin in South Africa, and Hatchett in Australia and New Zealand, and is available to order from Amazon and in most main bookstores.

You can find the links to the online How to Raise a Man course as well as information on the live 'Strong Mothers - Strong Sons' workshops.

The topics covered in the courses include:

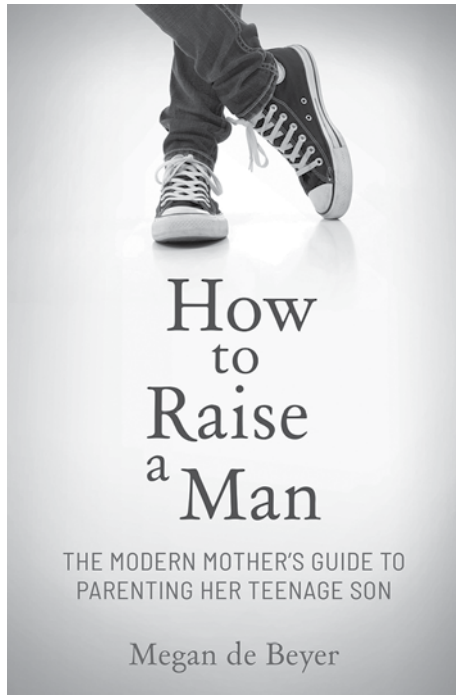
- The impact of Covid-19 on families.
- The role of a Mother - types of mothers and building self awareness.
- Who is this boy - understanding masculinity, identity & the hero's journey.
- Substances - understanding the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol
- Conscious parenting - your values
- Emotions - yours, his and improving EQ
- Communication - teen attunement, techniques to talking and the dilemma of screen time.
- Real issues mums have and advice from teens.

I hope you find that these worksheets support your parenting and offer you insight that will inspire your fascination and love of your teenage son/s.

Happy mothering! May you become a wise teacher and a willing student.

Prioritise what is most essential: relaxed time together without an agenda.

- MEGAN



 hachette  
BOOK GROUP

# How to Raise a Man

A Modern Mother's Guide To Parenting Her Teenage Son

by Megan de Beyer

Like it or not, your son is Generation Z. He has been adored and treasured, photographed and recorded. Many of his generation of adolescents are outwardly assertive and outspoken and have good boundaries, yet inwardly they are full of paradoxes. And they are confusing to manage – your GenZ or millennial rules you. They are clever. But you need to be smarter. Teens, and not confident, capable adults, are the ones who should overreact, sulk, withdraw or blame. If you find yourself resorting to this behaviour, it is time to reset your parenting methods, as teenagers need centred adults to guide them. If you are confused or irritated by your pre-teen or teenage son, or feel bewildered and hurt by his behaviour, this book will provide you with a clear understanding of teenagers in general and teenage boys in particular. As you learn about the development of masculinity, identify your parenting style, become better informed about your role as a parent and familiarise yourself with the issues facing parenthood today, you will become a more compassionate, centred and effective parent. Drawing on Eastern philosophy as well as Western psychology, the processes and ideas in this practical guide will help you survive your teenage son with your sanity intact.

How to Raise a Man is available is published by Penguin in South Africa and by Hachette in Australia and New Zealand and can also be ordered online. Click the icon below to buy your copy now.



Australia

New Zealand

# WORKSHEET 1 **Opening Thoughts**

1. What is your expectation of this process?

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2. What is your intention for your family during the pandemic?

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3. How have you adjusted your family routine and rules?

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To be completed at the end of the programme:

4. Has your intention changed in any way upon completion of this process?

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## WORKSHEET 2 **Why Mums & Sons?**

1. What are the emotions associated with being the mother of a teenage boy?

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2. What are the concerns, anxieties and questions that you have about being the mother of a teen boy?

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3. How justified are these concerns?

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4. Define your role as mother?

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5. Why are you doing these mother-and-son worksheets?

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6. What are the negative qualities you have experienced around men?

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## Why Mums & Sons? (continued)

7. What are positive masculine qualities that you have experienced?

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8. Describe your son's behaviour that you react negatively to.

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9. How much of your reaction is a result of your own negative experience of men?

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10. What kind of man do you want to raise?

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11. Do you know anyone like this?

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12. What kind of relationship do you want to have with your son?

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## WORKSHEET 3 **Society's beliefs about what it means to be a man**

1. What are the beliefs you hold about what it is to be male?

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2. Have you noticed any changes with your son when he is in male company? And amongst girls and women?

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3. What 'masculine' behaviours have you encouraged? Do you discourage certain macho behaviours and why?

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4. How does the #Metoo campaign and stories affect how you parent your son?  
What are your thoughts and feelings?

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## Are you Sexist?

Reflect on the statements below. Do you agree or disagree with them?  
Does your son agree or disagree?

**1. A man should never admit when others hurt his feelings.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**2. Men should be detached in emotionally charged situations.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**3. Men should have home improvement skills.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**4. Homosexuals should never kiss in public.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**5. Boys should prefer to play with trucks rather than dolls.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**6. A man should be the leader of any group.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**7. It is important for a man to take risks, even if he might get hurt.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**8. When the going gets tough, men should get tough.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

**9. I think a young man should try to be physically tough, even if he's not big.**

**You:** Yes  No       **Your son:** Yes  No

These statements from the MRNI-SF scale conform to traditional Western masculine norms. The more you or your son agree with them, the more you buy into machismo. The tougher your son believes he should be, the more likely he will be aggressive or dismissive towards women. Use his answers as a way to have a conversation about prejudices and stereotypes to shake up his viewpoints.

You can get a free interpretative summary on this website: [www.DrRonald-Levant.com](http://www.DrRonald-Levant.com).



# WORKSHEET 4 Self-Awareness

This worksheet is five pages long. Try and answer honestly spontaneously. There is no right or wrong. The purpose of it is to inspire reflection and self-awareness.

1. What is your overarching wish for your boy/s?

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2. Have you achieved these wishes for yourself?

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3. Your upbringing & reflecting back:

3.1. Describe how were you 'mothered' as a child?

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3.2 What do you imagine you needed from your mother as a teen?

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3.3 Does this impact on how you mother now? And How?

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4. Rate your self-esteem at the moment 0-10:

(0: 'I loathe myself' - 10: 'I love and accept everything about myself')

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## Self-Awareness (continued)

5. Rate your contentment with your life from 0-10:  
(0: 'I hate my situation' - 10: 'I am fully satisfied and enjoy my life situation')

5.1 What important dreams, desires, and hopes for yourself have you not achieved?

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5.2 What are the personal or situational obstacles preventing you from achieving what you desire for yourself?

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5.3 Does this in any way influence how you raise your son?  
(Eg, do you over or under-emphasize certain of his personality traits or goals)

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6. Wants and needs. Note: WANTS are physical or doable things and NEEDS are internal satisfiers or relate to emotions.

6.1 List your tangible 'wants'.

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6.2 List your 'needs' (eg, Security, recognition, status, attention, affection, respect, happiness, purpose, to belong, fun, approval).

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## Self-Awareness (continued)

7. What is your main worry for your family and for your son/s?

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7.2 Is this a result of your own upbringing (or a hangover from your parent's worries)?

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7.3 Are these worries justified?

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8. What are your typical negative reactions towards your son?  
(Eg, Anger, denial, panic, anxiety, withdrawal, or disappointment.)

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8.1 What are the general things that you normally react negatively to with your son?

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8.2 When he behaves like that what are your spontaneous assumptions or conclusions?

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*‘When our fears are triggered we react.’*



## Self-Awareness (continued)

### 9. Values

9.1 What is most important to you in life?

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9.2 What are the values that underpin this?

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9.3 List your values that are influenced by society or friends?

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9.4 Which of my values are intrinsic, ie, my own and not aimed at pleasing another or achieving something?

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9.5 List 5 personal & individual values that you can live right now:

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## Self-Awareness (continued)

### 9.6 List your family values:

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### 9.7 Are your personal and family values the same or do they clash?

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### Some Popular Values:

Authenticity, Achievement, Adventure, Balance, Compassion, Community, Contribution, Creativity, Competency, Curiosity, Fame, Fun, Faith, Growth, Happiness, Honesty, Influence, Inner Harmony, Justice, Knowledge, Love, Loyalty, Meaningful Work, Openness, Optimism, Peace, Poise, Popularity, Recognition, Religion, Reputation, Responsibility, Security, Self-Respect, Spirituality, Stability, Success, Status, Trustworthiness, Wealth and Wisdom.



## WORKSHEET 5 **Family Messages**

1. Take time to remember growing up and living at home with your parents. Try and remember them as they were – get behind the idealised view that initially springs to mind and push yourself to be honest about the overall experience of being at home. These are the spontaneous family messages.

**1.1 List all the positive adjectives that describe your parents. Eg, warm, strong, always there, supportive, caring, etc.**

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**2. List all the negative adjectives that describe your parents. Eg, distant, emotionally absent, pushy, demanding, etc.**

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**3. Which characteristic impacted on you the most?**

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**4. Think carefully about the spoken and unspoken messages that your parents passed on to you about life, people and the world. List them below. Eg, 'Life is uncertain', 'Work hard', 'Don't trust people'.**

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**5. Describe how you think your son may see you. List the positive and negative characteristics.**

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**6. What are the messages that your children are learning in your family?**

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**7. What messages would you like to orientate your home around?**

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# Developmental Phases & Tasks

Remember the behaviours you watched out for when your son was a baby – sucking, smiling, grabbing, sitting, going onto solids? These are mile-stones you didn't have to chivvy along – it's a natural progression.

## **The following are the early behaviour and developmental phases**

- 0 to 2 years – attachment (physical connecting)
- 2 to 3 years – exploration (emotional security, exploring, coping with change)
- 3 to 4 years – the first throes of identity formation (differentiation, playing with personas)
- 4 to 6 years – the beginning of certain competencies (belief in personal power, socialising)
- 6 to 9 years – the development of empathy and concern for others (understanding friendships).

Each life stage has tasks that need to be successfully accomplished for healthy development. Adolescence requires that teens experience some control over their lives, experiment with and explore an autonomous identity, and begin to experience some independence from family constraints. Being bombarded by surges of testosterone marks their entry into sexuality and relationships.

## **The five tasks your son has to achieve during adolescence:**

- Find his autonomy.
- Separate from the family.
- Explore intimacy and sexuality.
- Explore identity.
- Find his tribe (group or clan).

Your boy's maturity and psychological well-being depend on him achieving these tasks. Help him, in your own way, to accomplish them.

# WORKSHEET 6 Time-line Exercise

Drawing up a self-reflection time-line can help your son discover where he may have experienced some disadvantages.  
Draw 3 lines across an A4 page spaced out by approx. 6 spaces.

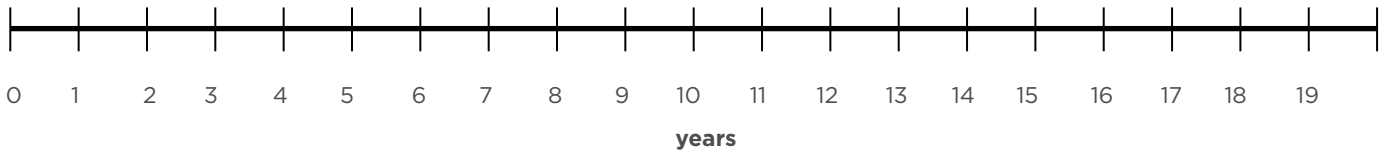
**LINE 1** - is your son

**LINE 2** - is you as mother

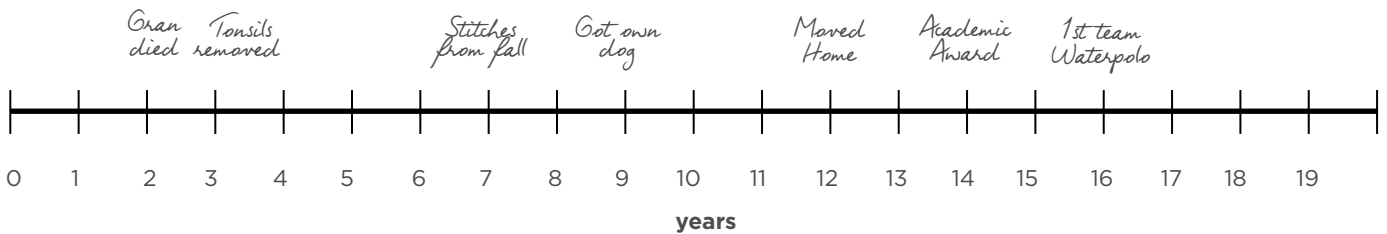
**LINE 3** - is family & developmental stages of your son/s

## LINE 1

Mark off the years since your son was born.

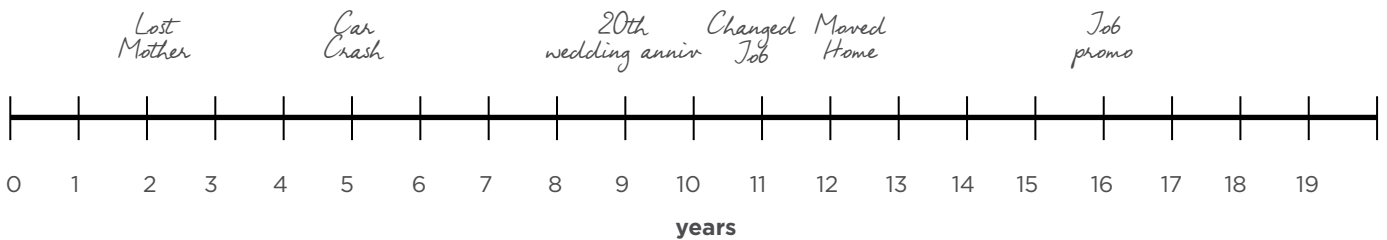


Hand write above these ages any major events in HIS life - both positives and negatives...  
sickness, awards, losses, medications, allergies, achievements, school or home moves...



## LINE 2

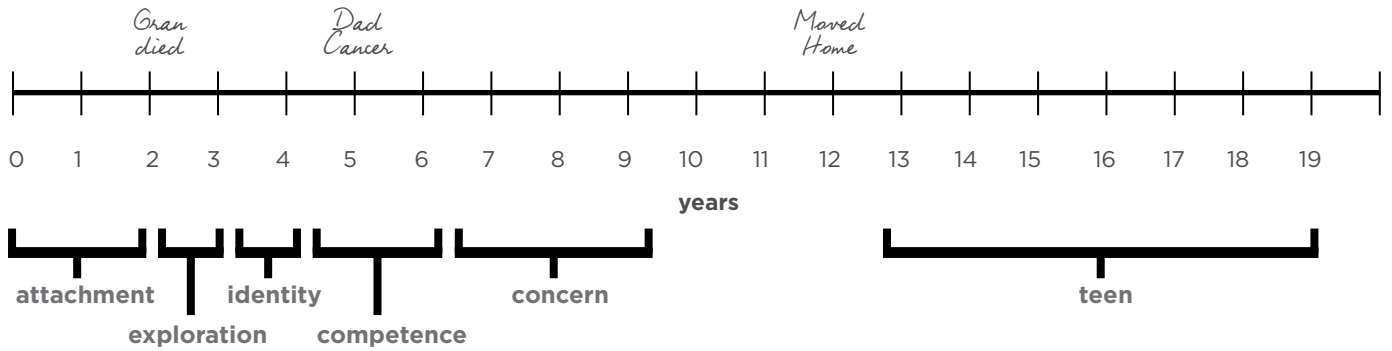
Repeat the line as above. Mark major events in YOUR life & note how they coincide with your son's timeline... sickness, losses, achievements, relationship change, events, jobs, mental health.



## Timeline Exercise (continued)

### LINE 3

This represents your sons time within family life, since he was born. Add the development stages discussed on page 17 and now mark any major family events, divorce, moves, losses, stressors, positives



*Now compare all three lines and note how they relate to each other.*

### Questions for reflection:

What stands out for you?

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Is your son compromised in any way during his early development phases?

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Did any major events occur at the same time and how could that have affected his psycho-social development?

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What other insights do you note?

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## WORKSHEET 7 **How can you help with developmental tasks?**

Think of a real life example for each 'task'. Autonomy, Identity, Morality and Intimacy. What shows up in your home? Discuss this and work with one practical example by answering the question below.

- 1. AUTONOMY: He needs to feel that he has some control over his life and can develop skills to make his own decisions. He also needs to feel separate to the family and an individual in his own way. Find an example - note how you parented and now suggest some adaptations.**

**How can you help with this process and 'parent' at the same time?**

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**What are the potential clashes?**

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- 2. IDENTITY: He needs to develop a clear idea of who he is which involves an understanding of strengths, weaknesses, values and beliefs. He needs to know that he is a valuable, worthwhile and unique person within his community. He may also question himself continuously. He may try out different trends and styles as well as copying others. Find an example that demonstrates this. How did you respond? And find ways to support this developmental need. How can you help with this process while still parenting with limits?**

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**What are the potential clashes?**

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## How can you help with developmental tasks? (continued)

3. **MORALITY:** He needs to explore right from wrong and examine values, beliefs and discover his own conscience. He needs to know when and which voice he should listen to. He may be strict and lax at different times. His understanding of cause and effect is not clear. He does not have an adult brain nor an adult's experience. He is primarily sensation seeking which can affect moral choice. He needs to remember to think of others. Think of an example that demonstrates this and note how you responded.

How can you help and parent at the same time?

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What are the pitfalls?

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4. **INTIMACY:** Establishing love and objects outside the family. Learning relationship skills and the thrills and spills of love. Learning that he is valuable & loved. Being able to reach out and be consistently attached. Navigating the perils of female friendships and hierarchies. Being able to express feelings clearly and set boundaries with boys and girls.

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How can you help with this process?

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What are the potential clashes?

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## WORKSHEET 8 **Determining own parenting style**

**Choose one of following responses:**

**A: 'I decide, may discuss it yet expect my son to do as I say'**

**B: 'I discuss, practice compromise, usually let teen make final decision'**

**C: 'Let my son make his own decision'**

**How would you approach the issue of:**

1. Buying or wearing of bizarre clothes that he wears out of school? \_\_\_\_\_
2. An unconventional hairstyle he wants during holidays? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Music on or 'screens' while doing homework? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Going to music concerts with friends before age 15? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Dating at age 13? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Smoking? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your son is 16 and is having a party because Mom 'won't be there'? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Doesn't want to tell you where he is going with his mates? \_\_\_\_\_
9. His decisions on how he wants to spend his pocket money? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Job decisions for after school? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Decisions about how much he helps in the house? \_\_\_\_\_
12. If he doesn't want to go along to a family outing? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Wants to go partying on a school night? \_\_\_\_\_
14. He has a friend who you think is taking drugs? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Untidy room? \_\_\_\_\_
16. He wants to take on a part-time job? \_\_\_\_\_
17. He wants to sleep over at a friend after a party? \_\_\_\_\_
18. 16 year old wants to drink alcohol? \_\_\_\_\_
19. He wants to drop a subject? \_\_\_\_\_
20. He wants to give up a musical instrument? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Decision on what time to come home from a party? \_\_\_\_\_
22. He wants to decorate his room himself? \_\_\_\_\_
23. How much/ little and what he eats? \_\_\_\_\_

## Determining own parenting style (continued)

### RESULTS

#### **More A's: Authoritarian style**

Here the parents make all the decisions. Children must obey and 'do as I say'. Parents are the head of the house and children must fit in. This approach limits self-expression and offers conditional affirmation often resulting in the teen showing a 'false self' to please the parent. Good self-esteem and development of autonomy is delayed.

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#### **Mainly B's: Authoritative.**

This is a firm but fair approach. It is a negotiating parenting style. Children are clear on boundaries and communication channels are always kept open. The child feels important to parents and household decisions. It promotes decision-making skills and allows informed independence. Child learns that there are consequences for his decisions that break rules. Relationships with responsibility become all important. (Discussing the situation for the purpose of persuading your son to listen to you is not authoritative nor is allowing a dialogue knowing from the start that you will say no!)

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#### **Mainly C's: Permissive**

Here the parents are unsure of and unclear of boundaries and rules. Structure is not available and the child is given too much power. Parents are often too busy or too caught up in their own lives to really be in touch with what a child needs. Child does things his own way although lacks the skills and foresight. May grow up with a sense of entitlement or restlessness. Note: There is a 'positive' permissiveness. When you have a very cautious or trustworthy son, you may allow him to make his own decisions earlier than most rebellious boys. When your son is 18 and older it is important to hand over most decisions to him.

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# Social Life & Sex

## The boy code & friends:

- 'Stand up for your buddies no matter what' and code of silence.
- Actions speak louder than words.
- Be there when your friends need you.
- Stay cool no matter what.
- Teasing is an acceptable way to show affection.

## How do we see this in our sons' friendships?

### Friends

#### Be concerned if your son...

- Is Lonely
- Does Not Socialise
- Does Not Bring His Friends Home
- Does not have friends of both sexes.

#### Is your home boy friendly?

- There is somewhere they can gather comfortably.
- You have teen foods that they like and are allowed to snack on.
- There is stuff that they like to do (pool tables, music, basket ball, games)
- You know your son's buddies and greet them by name.
- You don't criticize him in front of his mates.

#### Encourage his friendships by:

- Involving his friends in some family activities.
- Get to know his friends' parents.
- Praise his acts of friendship openly.
- Tolerate the loud music and voices as much as you can.
- Don't object all the time to his mobile communication.

#### Darling, do you have to be friends with him?

- What will happen if you reject you son's friend?
- What should parents do when they disapprove of their son's friends?

### Why friends of the opposite sex are important:

- Boys do not feel the need to compete with girls.
- Girls can be powerful allies in social situations.
- Girls make it safe for a boy to express his feelings.
- Co-ed friendships de-mystify women.

## Talking about sex

### Now or never!

The basic principle of talking to pre-teen boys about sex: the content of the conversations is not as important as the values and attitudes towards sex that you communicate.

### Topics you need to discuss...

- Puberty - boys and girls development
- The mechanics of reproduction.
- The facts about STIs.
- Your thoughts on teen sex.
- Pornography.
- Homophobia, being gay, being Trans or gender fluidity
- Sex, love, commitment and marriage.
- Your values and your son's choices.

### Some good times to talk to your son about sex...

- After you have seen a movie or news broadcast that deals with sex.
- If someone you know has become pregnant.
- When you hear a sexual slur ('faggot', 'slut')
- When you are talking about your early romantic experiences.
- When talking about your parents' values and rules.



## WORKSHEET 9 **Porn and sexting**

Collaborate to work out your family's view on porn and sexting. Set boundaries and discuss the consequences of not meeting the family values. Use the following questions to achieve this:

**1. How much sexual freedom should your son have?**

---

**2. Is it his right to express his sexuality in the way he chooses?**

---

**3. How do you feel about your son receiving a sext from an admirer?**

---

**4. And how do you feel about him sending a sext of himself?**

---

**5. Do you have filters on your home computers?**

---

**6. Should you monitor your son's phone and laptop?**

---

**7. What is your attitude towards pornography usage?**

---

**8. What rules do you have in place in the home?**

---

**9. Have you ever used pornography for sexual arousal?**

---

**10. Should your son be allowed to watch some porn?**

---

**11. Does your son know the impact of porn on his emotional and sexual well-being?**

---



## **Porn and sexting (continued)**

Mothers need to have courageous conversations with their sons. They need to ask in a forthright manner about porn usage and highlight the dangers and impact that it has on their development. If this is not possible, at least do not turn a blind eye. Give him articles to read, motivate his school to engage boys on the facts and consequences of pornography, or go and see a professional together.

Talk openly about how pressuring girls to consent to sexual acts can constitute harassment. Also speak about the dangers of sexting and how it can ruin one's reputation for years, and may even impact a future career. Discuss how girls' reputations are more negatively affected than boys', and that it is important to care about their friends and have respect for girls. In many instances, sending sexual messages can have legal complications, and you should familiarise yourself and your son with this information.

**Is your son aware of the consequences of all his actions, sexual and otherwise?**

# Addiction

## The two enemies:

### 1. Ignorance

### 2. Denial

#### Factors contributing to the drug problem in our community...

- Increased exposure and availability of drugs
- Adult usage of alcohol / drugs
- Trance and music festival culture
- Prevalence of mental health disorders eg: High anxiety and depression
- Highly competitive and stressful environment
- Access to information & money

## Signs & symptoms of drug use...

#### At home:

- He avoids family activities
- He avoids responsibilities
- Appetite changes
- Disappearance of valuable items/money
- Not coming home on time
- Secrecy
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Lying about his activities
- Finding the following: cigarette rolling papers, pipes, small glass vials, small plastic bank bags, remnants of drugs (seeds, white powder etc.)

#### At school:

- drop in grades
- Loss of interest in learning
- Sleeping in class
- Poor work performance
- Not doing homework
- Poor attitude towards sports or other extra-curricular activities
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Reduced memory and attention span
- Not informing you of school activities

#### Physical and emotional signs:

- changes friends
- Uncharacteristic and erratic behaviour
- Negative, argumentative, paranoid or confused, destructive, overly anxious
- Over-reacts to criticism
- Overly tired or hyperactive
- Drastic weight loss or gain
- Unhappy/depressed/mood swings

- Deterioration in standards of personal hygiene and appearance of his skin

The biggest difficulty with these symptoms is that normal teen growth can often include these changes. It is not always easy to spot what is a result of hormonal and brain changes; what is a mental health difficulty and what is a result of drugs. When in doubt ask a direct question. Your son's response will tell you if you are on the right track.

## Things you can do:

- Be well informed yourself.
- Talk to your son about drugs.
- Don't be naive or ignorant.
- Find ways to engage with your son.
- Provide natural highs.
- Stay positively attuned and connected to your son.

## Staying connected to your teenage son

### Open heart, open mind, open will

Check your own attitude and presence first before finger pointing. The best inoculation against drug addiction is a relationship with a nurturing adult that he values. A wise adult who allows him to be himself and believes in him.

### Avoid attacking his character by:

- Criticizing and judging
- Blaming and shaming

### Try to keep the relationship alive by being there for him and rather:

- Listen with an open mind
- Share with an open heart
- Encourage his passions
- Be open and willing to connect
- Be present when you spend time together
- Do stuff together

## Alcohol: teen drug of choice

There is a diverse pattern of alcohol usage among teenagers globally. But all countries in the Western world have one thing in common: before the end of high school, almost all teens would have tried alcohol. This is why parents need to be informed and watch their own alcohol use around their sons. 'Drinking with the boys' still has a weird status among teen boys. By discussing the topic, you help your son question his thinking and find other, more meaningful, group activities.



# WORKSHEET 10 Alcohol

Discuss with your partner whether you agree or disagree with these statements, and create your family policy on alcohol:

**1. When boys are growing up, it is normal for them to try out alcohol.**

**You:** Agree  Disagree       **Your partner:** Agree  Disagree

**2. It is sensible for parents to allow their boys to drink alcohol.**

**You:** Agree  Disagree       **Your partner:** Agree  Disagree

**3. Allowing young boys to consume alcohol in moderation and under supervision teaches them to drink responsibly.**

**You:** Agree  Disagree       **Your partner:** Agree  Disagree

You will also need to answer the following:

**1. At what age am I comfortable for my son to start drinking?**

---

**2. Where and under what circumstances is it acceptable for my son to drink?**

---

**3. When do I want my son to start buying his own alcohol?**

---

**4. What do I want my son to know about alcohol and drug use?**

---

Some psychologists believe drinking is a normal part of socialisation that enables teenagers to experiment with and acquire adult behaviour; that complete abstinence is as deviant as excessive drinking, and that in our society drinking alcohol in moderation is normal.

**1. Do you and your family agree with these beliefs?**

---

**2. Have you discussed them??**

---



# WORKSHEET 11 **Generative Communication**

## **Dialogue – Listening & Sharing Exercise: (approx. 35 minutes)**

### **Explanation:**

This is an exercise to practice with your partner or a close friend, I will call this person 'the coach'. I use this deep dialogue in my workshops to help mothers drop deeply into a concern they have. This is not how I expect you to communicate with your son – it is rather a practice to help you understand how deeply you need to listen if you want to develop a conscious communication style. It helps a mother see a challenge from different perspectives and answers these questions:

**What is my role in this difficulty?**

**What do I need answered?**

**What will help restore healthy relations?**

**What behaviours or attitudes may I, or other family members, will help us to be more connected?**

Remember - It is not just about your son needing to change or improve, but noticing how the family system and the environment contributes.

This exercise demonstrates 'dialoguing' in what I call level 3 of conscious communication. It requires an open mind and an open heart and can easily move to generative conversation.

### **Guidelines:**

**Step 1.** The mother thinks about a concern she has about her son. It may help to write it down. This could be something that worries her about her son or it could be a difficulty she has in their relationship.

**Step 2.** The mother sinks into her concern and lets herself be guided by the coach into an inner experience.

**Step 3.** The coach follows the format below, saying each statement out loud and asking the questions listed.

**Step 4.** The coach sticks to the time-line recommended by prompting the time.

**Step 5.** The coach does not ask her own questions nor does she give advice. This dialogue is for the mother and her own unique experience.

**Step 6.** If you do not have a 'coach' to work with then go through the format and write down your responses.

### **The Dialogue Practice**

1. **Select:** a 'mother' and a coach and a parenting challenge: **(2 min)**

2. Explore the parenting challenge of the mother's: **(10 min)**

The coach says: We will take 10mins to reflect on your parenting challenge. I will ask you a few questions and we will look at the challenge from different perspectives.

- The current situation: Can you describe the parenting challenge you are engaged with?
- Now try and state it objectively. Describe it in a more concrete manner - what can you see or touch in reality, if you remove your emotional content.
- Let's explore the wider context: what is happening, how long and how often? With whom? How might significant others view this situation? When did it start and when is it more or less intense?
- Identify your feelings: when you think about the challenge and when it's happening.

Try this sentence: I FEEL \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN YOU \_\_\_\_\_ BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

- Describe your assumptions or agenda. This can help identify your learning threshold: what assumptions, fears, anxieties of yours are being triggered? Are you being overly anxious and what does it tell you about yourself? What do you need to let go of? What is your reaction telling you about yourself?



## Generative Communication (continued)

3. **Coaches listen deeply** and then summarise what they heard the mother say. She may ask clarifying questions (but don't give advice!) Eg, 'Tell me more about?' 'Please clarify \_\_\_\_\_' 'Please repeat \_\_\_\_\_'  
Coaches can use 'appreciative inquiry' - 'I like the way you \_\_\_\_\_',  
'I appreciate your view because \_\_\_\_\_' **(5 min)**

4. Let's explore your **ideal outcome & intention**: imagine what future you would ideally like to see?  
How could the ideal future or outcome look for everyone involved? How does this feel now?  
Identify help needed: where do you need input or help? And what do you need to learn? **(3Min)**

5. We will sit in **stillness for 2 min** and during this time:

- Listen to your heart: connect with your heart to what you're feeling/hearing.
- Listen to what resonates: what images, metaphors, feelings and gestures come up for you that capture the essence of what you said?
- Notice your energy level?
- Notice how you feel?

6. **We will use a technique called focusing where** we share the images/metaphors, feelings and gestures that came up in the silence or while listening to the challenge. We do not have to make logical sense of this, yet describe what came up. **(2 min)**

7. Let's continue to **Generative dialogue (8 min)**

Let's reflect on the remarks by the mother and move into a generative dialogue on how these observations can offer new perspectives on the mother's situation and her self-awareness. The coach can validate and appreciate the mother's courage or openness to explore.

Go with the flow of the dialogue. Build on each other's ideas. Stay in service of the mother without pressure to fix or resolve her challenge. Celebrate positives.

8. Closing remarks **(2min)**

By coach

By mother: **How do I now see the situation and the way forward. What is the first step?**

9. **SWITCH**

## WORKSHEET 12 **Being a conscious parent**

1. As a mum my short term goals for my son are:

---

---

2. My long term overall goals are:

---

---

3. I chose to be a parent because:

---

---

4. I am promoting my goals when I am:

---

---

5. I am limiting or neglecting my parenting goals when I am:

---

---

6. I am most satisfied as a mum when:

---

---

7. I am most dissatisfied when:

---

---

8. My relationship with my son has been and now is:

---

---



## Being a conscious parent (continued)

9. When I \_\_\_\_\_ I get positive responses from my son

---

---

10. When I \_\_\_\_\_ I get negative responses from my son.

---

---

11. The ideal parent should:

---

---

12. The things I worry about the most as a parent:

---

---

### My Parenting Partner

13. Our parenting conflicts are usually about:

---

---

14. We could make the following adjustments:

---

---

15. My frustrations and joys about my partner's parenting approach:

---

---

16. This impacts on me in the following way:

---

---





## Being a conscious parent (continued)

17. My parents (when I lived with them)

17.1 My mum was most helpful when:

---

---

17.2 I wish she would have:

---

---

17.3 The ways my dad influenced me were:

---

---

17.4 The things that had a negative impact on me were:

---

---

17.5 I would like to be like them in this way:

---

---

17.6 I do not want to copy the following:

---

---

18. My challenges and changes as a mum:

---

---

19. I would like to work on the following:

---

---



## WORKSHEET 13 **Why he pushes your buttons**

These are 'irrational beliefs' we hold: which are yours?

ASSUMPTION	Yes	No	Sometimes
If a person doesn't like or love me it's my fault			
It's very hard to be alone			
It's important to please others			
What others think of me is very important			
I have to be the best at everything I do			
I should never be angry or irritable			
I should be able to solve everything myself			
To fail is terrible & unacceptable			
If I stop worrying I'm afraid something bad will happen			

**“Society’s gender straight-jacket requires boys to live half a self...  
their tough, heroic, action orientated and physical self.”**

**- From Real Boys, Pollack**



# WORKSHEET 14 Emotional Intelligence Relationship Quiz

Complete this quiz to understand your emotional EQ

**1. Are you attentive when listening to your partner or are you easily distracted?**

---

---

**2. Are you comfortable when there is silence during communication?**

---

---

**3. Do you judge or critique your own emotions or feelings?**

---

---

**4. Do you listen to your gut feeling when making an important question?**

---

---

**5. Can you calm yourself down effectively when you are stressed?**

---

---

**6. Are you able to use humour to mediate through rough times?**

---

---

**7. Are you able to deal with differences and disagreements?**

---

---

---

---

---

---



## WORKSHEET 15 **Does your boy need help?**

If you are concerned about your teen, do not ask him if he wants to talk to someone. Take him to talk to a counsellor or psychologist. If you think your teen is suffering, it is your responsibility to get help. Do not assume that your child is 'grown-up enough' to make his own decisions regarding this matter. You are the parent, and it is still your responsibility.

Of course, your teen may be extremely resistant or hostile, or even blame you and tell you it's a waste of money etc, but do not be intimidated. Let the professional worry about the teen's resistance. After all, that's the person's job!

There are many reasons teens may get depression, which

we discuss in my book. To these we can now add the effects of Covid-19 restrictions: isolation, loss of important celebrations and milestones, the impossibility of meeting goals worked towards for many years, the family's financial situation...

Read through the checklist below and tick 'Yes' if you are noticing a particular symptom more than 50% of the time that you are with your son. Is there a valid reason for this behaviour? Are you noticing it almost every day (for more than a month)? If you answer 'Yes' to more than one symptom, please have a look at the guidelines below the worksheet.

### **SYMPTOM CHECKLIST**

Evidence of the depression triangle – pessimistic about himself, the future and the world in general	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Worrying and being anxious or tense with physical symptoms	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Compulsive behaviours	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Obsessive thinking about people, events, possibilities	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
PTSD symptoms with stress reactions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Withdrawing from friends and previously enjoyed activities, and feeling alienated	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Showing increased irritability or agitation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in eating or sleeping patterns	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Having low energy or motivation and lacking concentration	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of recurring themes of death and suicide	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Associating with a negative peer group or using the 'dark Web'	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

#### **If you notice one or more of the symptoms on the checklist:**

- Don't minimise your concerns.
- Don't think all that is needed is reassurance.
- Be patient with your teenager, but not with the situation.
- Keep the channels open, especially for support and help.
- Listen, listen and listen some more.
- Compliment your teenager on his strengths.
- Don't hesitate to talk to school personnel, or a professional, if you suspect that your child might harm himself or others (there will be lots of time later to apologise if you acted in error); a lifetime is often not enough to make up for not acting on what turns out to be a valid concern.



# Rate Yourself, Your Spouse and Your Teen

Over the next few pages are some rating scales. They are not psychological assessments and I have included them solely for self-reflection. They have been adapted from an exercise in the book 'Raising emotionally intelligent children,' by Elias, Tobias and Friedlander.

1. **Temperament scale: This looks at the traits that make up one's temperament, that part of the personality that is genetically inherited.**
2. **Your current life satisfaction.**
3. **Rate how you were parented by your own parents. Think back to when you were a child and rate them from a child's perception. Are you parenting differently now?**
4. **Rate your parenting partner from your point of view.**
5. **Rate your parent challenges**

## WORKSHEET 16 Temperament Scale

Circle the number that corresponds to your teen's characteristic, and place an X over the number that corresponds to your characteristic. Use a different colour to circle the number of your spouse.

a. Discipline									
Easy									Impossible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

b. Adaptability									
Flexible									Rigid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

c. Reactivity									
Easy-going									Quick & intense
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

d. Mood									
Good									Bad
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

e. Mood Stability									
Stable									Variable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

f. Behaviour									
Thoughtful									Impulsive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			



# WORKSHEET 17 Your Current Life Circumstances

This part of the survey explores your work situation. By 'work' here we mean your job or career, volunteer work, or full-time parenting. Please circle the number that corresponds to how things are currently.

## a. Flexibility

Very

1

2

3

4

5

6

Rigid

7

## b. Satisfaction

Complete

1

2

3

4

5

6

Dissatisfied

7

## c. Stress

Minimal

1

2

3

4

5

6

Extreme

7

## d. Time Demands

Easy

1

2

3

4

5

6

Urgent

7

## e. Compensation

Fair

1

2

3

4

5

6

Strict & rigid

7

## f. Enjoyment

Fun

1

2

3

4

5

6

None

7

## g. Co-Workers

Supportive

1

2

3

4

5

6

Undermining

7

## h. Hecticness

Okay

1

2

3

4

5

6

Stressed out

7



# WORKSHEET 18 The EQ Parenting Survey – Know Yourself

## Your Parented Past

Complete the following survey exploring your relationship with your parents. Place a X over the number that corresponds to how you felt about your parents during adolescence, and circle the number for how you rate your present family.

### a. Closeness

Very close Not at all close

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### b. Honesty

Complete openness No communication

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### c. Emotional Support

Kind & available Cold & distant

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### d. Financial Support

When necessary None/Dependent

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### e. Contact Frequency

Comfortable None/Too much

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### f. Approval

Unconditional acceptance Critical

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### g. Approach to Discipline

Fair Harsh/Overly lenient

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

### h. Emotional Expression

Expressive & engaged Cold/Dismissive

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7



# WORKSHEET 19 The Other Parent

Rate your parenting partner from your point of view. It's a good idea for him to rate you as well.

a. Supportive						
Very						Undermining
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Closeness to Us						
Intimate						Isolated
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Emotional Support						
Available						None
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Time Together						
Frequent						None
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Communication						
Good						None
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Sharing of Chores						
Equal						None
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Ability to Co-Parent						
On same page						Different approaches
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

As we implied when looking at the match of temperaments, a positive relationship and the ability to work together with the other parent are crucial for parenting any child. Not only does consistency between the parents help a child learn but lack of consistency undermines a child's feeling of security. This can only worsen as the child enters adolescence. If the teen is able to divide and conquer or, worse, cause conflict between the parents, you have a real problem. In saying this however - if parents have different parenting styles and parents accept and acknowledge differences, then a child adapts. Differences are fine if there is consistency and acceptance.





## WORKSHEET 20 **Rate your parenting challenges**

1 - Never 2 - Little 3 - Sometimes 4 - Mostly 5 - Always

<b>My personal parenting challenges</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
I support my son's ability and freedom to think					
I support the expression of ALL his feelings					
I allow him to be playfully physical					
I allow him to enjoy movement and his body appropriately					
I calmly manage his noise, activity and boisterousness					
I support ALL his creative tendencies					
I allow him to always be who he is at home					
I pay attention when he needs me					
I allow him his privacy					
I am consistent with my parenting					
I am able to set limits and abide by them					
I assert my personal boundaries					
I respect my son's personal boundaries					
I deal calmly and appropriately with his incessant needs and wants					
I manage my anger and frustration well					
I listen to and validate my son's opinions, ideas and concerns					
I empathize with him					
I allow him to explore the world					
I communicate well and reflect					
I spend time with him alone					
I am confident that I know which behaviours are appropriate					
I allow him to have and be with friends					
I am flexible with 'rules' and manners					
I feel connected to him					

**What I have now learnt about myself as a parent is:**

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# Strong Mothers Strong Sons

Presented by Megan de Beyer

MA (Psych) & MSc. Holistic Ecology (UK).

Registered psychologist in SA

Practice no: 8631255 | HPSCA registration number: 0041475

A member of British Psychological Society, UK.

**'I feel I have gained enormously from Megan's invaluable knowledge, support, techniques and approaches and must mention just how at ease she made us all feel. New friendships were made with other mums and how reassuring it is to know that we have these people to call on. I felt course content was so well covered. To Megan: honestly, from the bottom of my heart, you're such an inspiration to us moms of boys. A special thank you to you for everything!'**

**- A mother of a teenage son**

Would you like to deepen your parent learnings?

Megan has launched an ONLINE course on TEACHABLE.

This is a course you can do at your own pace.

Contact Details

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