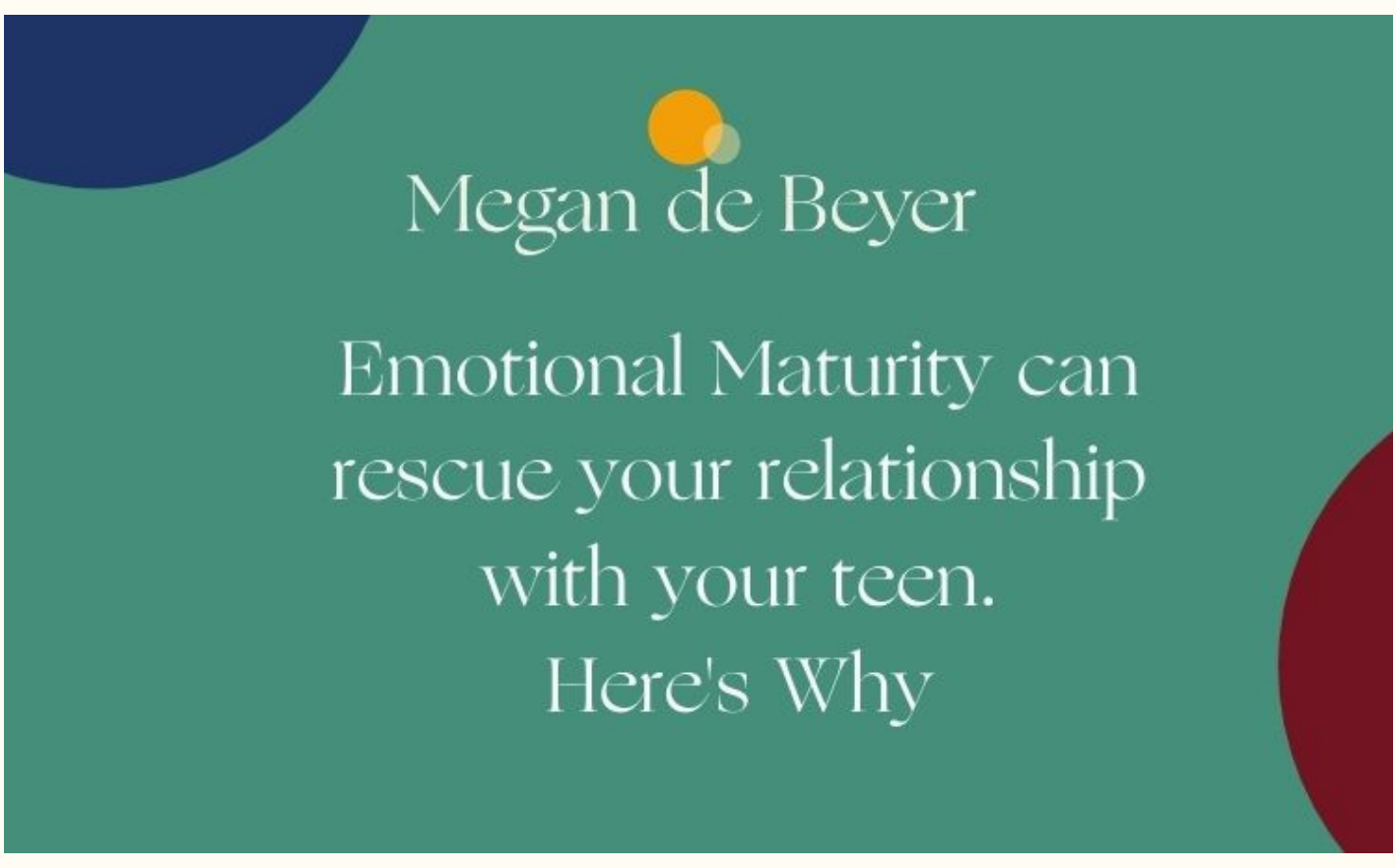

This is an extract from my book "How to Raise a Man," but I adapted it to help all of you with the task of staying in your adult energy when confronted with your teenager. I hope it helps! When people fly off the handle and react emotionally, it is often a sign of emotional immaturity.

Emotional maturity requires an ability to identify your emotions and to regulate them: you feel the emotion but take a moment to pause and be sensible. As emotionally mature adults, we should be able to control our emotions and reactions.

Emotional regulation is a skill your teen son also needs to learn. It is important that he learns to calm himself when his emotions are triggered.

Think your intention: you may want a good relationship with your son, but you also want to get your point across. You want respect from your son – he wants that from you, too! If you're both shouting at each other, no one is listening, no one is showing respect, and no one is getting their point across.

So, try this instead.
When a situation arises and you feel yourself reacting emotionally, say to yourself, 'This is not about me. Let me widen my view and change my perspective. I'm going to pause, breathe, and try to see this from my son's point of view for a moment.' And then I will paraphrase what he says, followed by a calm question, and then I will listen, and listen....

Remember, your son will mirror his environment. So, if you give a heightened reaction to his statement, you're going to get a heightened reaction right back.
If you project calm, he's more likely to reflect calm back. You can then get to the bottom of the issue and tell him how you feel, and you can learn how he feels, and why.

You have now skipped confrontation and moved to intentional dialogue.
Great! But, just as important, you're also teaching him the correct response in this type of situation. There are some techniques that will help you get to a calm place, allowing you to be present.

If you feel your anxiety or stress levels rise when he challenges you, visualize breathing down into the earth (out), and back up into your belly.
Try to clear your mind and, no matter what he says or how he says it, soften your heart.

Here's a great technique for softening and opening.
Think of him at age five, six or seven, on his first day of school, or fast asleep on your lap or in your arms – just hold that picture in your mind and you'll find that your heart will completely soften all over again. And you need a soft heart to move from reaction to responsive, from ping-ping opinion debates to empathic listening. It can take time for both of you, but eventually you will both get there. I can guarantee it.

So, what if he is downright rude? Sometimes, your son's agenda will prevent a dialogue from occurring.
I am not suggesting that you accept rudeness.
But you can also avoid going into reaction mode. Calm yourself down, bring your curiosity and instead of criticizing, ask, 'How do you feel about what you just did? Do you feel proud of yourself right now?'

Remember, we're not saying this in a sarcastic or critical way – we're simply curious:
'Is this something you admire about yourself? What would make you feel good right now? What would you do in this situation to help you feel good about yourself?'
Simple. You're giving responsibility back to him, so that he makes his own reference around what a fine young man really is.

It's how you ask the question that is important: with genuine curiosity, not knowing the answer in your head. See what comes from him. Most times he won't be able to answer, so what is the next thing you say?

'You know what, why don't you take some time and think about it? I'm not going to give you the answer, because my answer is not your answer.'
You hand it over and that makes him feel more empowered.

And he will think about it. One thing I can tell you about your son is that when you ask him to think about something, I promise you that he does. You may never hear back, or it might come out a month or a year later, but he will think about it.

We have to stop trying to provide the answers and let him come to them himself.

Does this resonate with you? I have developed an ONLINE COURSE which helps parents learn crucial skills for parenting in the teenage years. You can either do the FULL COURSE, or do one of three modules.
LEARN MORE by clicking the links below:

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CONSCIOUS PARENTING

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