

BALANCING TOMORROW, TODAY™

by Dr. Stacie



I had the privilege of speaking at an international conference of futurists this summer. Attendees came from across the globe to learn about and to discuss how trends and events impact our businesses and our lives in different ways. Although I was there to speak on business-related issues, I was there to *listen* to human-related issues. The question most on my mind was, "What are the critical issues for your teens in the...UK, Netherlands, Canada, South Korea...?" Being a parent of a teenager does put the angst of this particular era in the forefront of my life, but it is a very important touch point in our society as well. I am therefore going to deviate from my normal topic rotation for this back-to-school look at *balancing tomorrow, today – for teens*.

Why do I think that the teenage years are so important to all of us? First of all, I bet we all remember at least some of our teenage years no matter what our age. Second, I doubt any of us could be persuaded to relive our teenage years, no matter how old we are. Why is that? Because they were hard! Teenagers are filled with raging hormones, roaring needs for independence, AND are still kids. What a loaded combination! But wait, there is more.

Teenagers are also transitioning into adulthood, with more responsibilities for their actions and their accomplishments. They are required to start implementing the morals and values that parents and society have been teaching them over the years. Were they paying attention?

The teenage years are a time when young people must learn what is and what is not acceptable in the world for their long-term success and for the long-term health of our society. This is the time when the proverbial rubber meets the road for the first time in a child's life. It is now that they must learn what is okay and what is not okay in the real world.

When our teens are feeling nine feet tall and bullet-proof, to quote a friend, it is necessary to help them develop a relationship with their future.

The critical long-term issues I have found to be universal are *respect for yourself* and *respect for others*. These may sound simple and obvious to us, but they explode in the chaos and complexity of the teenage mind and body.

Respect for yourself means having regard for the long-term effects of what you put in your body (i.e., good nutrition and no drugs), how you take care of your body (i.e., good hygiene, rest, and grooming), and thus how you feel about yourself (even if you're feeling funky right now, if you make long-term decisions about how you take care for yourself, you'll feel better).

Respect for others means thinking about the long-term effects of how you treat people. For example, a little jovial teasing or poking at someone in school may seem harmless enough now, but this disrespect can cost your job for harassment or lead to escalating disrespect with graver social ramifications later in your life.

Today's teenagers *are* tomorrow's future. They are our leaders, our caregivers, our teachers, our scientists, and the parents of our grandchildren. What we do or do not invest in them now will come back to us ten fold. What are we going to give them?

Let's help our teenagers balance tomorrow, today. Here's what we can share:

- **Love**...no matter how ornery and independent they may sometimes seem, teens are people and teens are still kids...they need lots of loving. (Remember how HARD this is for them!)
- **Respect**...you know the saying...you reap what you sow. It is of course, much more important than this. We need to model our best social behavior because teens are transitioning into society and are adults in training, what they see is what they'll be.
- **Firm Boundaries**...right and wrong get a little fuzzy for the hormone-impaired! Be clear, be consistent, and follow through. Real life has price tags, welcome teens to real life.
- **Values**...give teens something to hold onto in dodgy situations. Peer pressure can't hold a candle to the insight strong values can provide for making enlightened decisions under pressure. Don't be afraid to drill them in!

Balancing hormones, newly increasing independence, responsibility, respect for oneself and respect for others is a process...not a destination. *Help a teenager balance today!*

Dr. Stacie Morgan is the author of **Balancing Tomorrow, Today – AT HOME**. (New Strategy Press). For more information visit her website at www.balancedmanagement.com or e-mail her at stacie@balancedmanagement.com.