

## How to Survive Your Teenager

**Beth Gluck, Editor**

**Joel Rosenfeld, Editor**

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When a mother holds her newborn in her arms, she doesn't ask herself "How will I survive his teenage years?" That thought does start to cross her mind, though, shortly after her toddler's first "No!" When those worries begin to do more than cross a parent's mind—when her son's pants start creeping lower or her daughter's shirts start creeping higher—it might be time to read this book.

Each chapter is filled with quotes from parents and experts who share their opinions on topics as benign as school success (or failure) or as dangerous as alcohol, drugs, and sex. The latest in the publisher's *How to Survive* series (which includes books on dating, marriage, moving, babies, and more), this volume contains many useful recommendations, admirably compiled and edited by two parents of teenagers, and grouped in chapters that each deals with an issue. The name of each contributor, where he or she hails from, and the age and sex of his or her children follow each tidbit, adding credibility to their advice.

The book's humorous subtitle is: *by Hundreds of Still-Sane Parents Who Did, and Some Things to Avoid, from a Few Whose Kids Drove Them Nuts*. A warning notice, posted just inside the front cover, warns readers that the numerous opinions that these hundreds of parents share in the book's pages vary greatly, and that readers should use their own "head when selecting advice" to act upon.

This difference of opinion is apparent in many sections, including the chapter on personal appearance. One parent advises to let teenagers be themselves and not interfere in appearance decisions: "They're going to do all kinds of crazy things to try to express themselves, or distinguish themselves as different. As long as they're not hurting themselves or others, I say let them do it." The opposing view, from another writer, is: "I absolutely do not allow my son or daughters to get any tattoos or weird piercings while they're living under my roof." He then notes that when they turn eighteen and move out, they can make whatever decisions they want about their own bodies.

A topic they all seem to agree on is that parents must communicate about alcohol and drugs. One went so far as to permit drug use at home, while another took her son to the hospital to see a person with alcohol poisoning to prove her point: "I brought my son to visit and see how absolutely pathetic that was."

Parents of teens and parents of kids approaching those years will find wisdom on each page. Though some sections feel more negative than encouraging, *How to Survive Your Teenager* provides insight, humor, and empathy for parents wading through the trials and tribulations of raising a teenager.

TROY-MICHELLE REINHARDT (August 18, 2009)

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