

Pointers For Parents

How To “Decode” Your Teen

(NAPSA)—Probably every parent has been there: the moment when they think they’re talking “straight” to their teen only to be met with a roll of the eyes and a look of exasperation on their child’s face. Every one of these uncomfortable interactions can spawn feelings of parental failure. Remember this, though: *We’ve all been there.*

Of course, there’s only so much consolation to be found in recalling the years we felt our own parents didn’t have a clue about the world we as teenagers lived in and that they were wholly oblivious to the pressures we faced.

Valuable insight into what teens are thinking may be derived from a recent study completed by teen megabrand Herbal Essences, entitled the Teen Attitude Survey. The landmark survey asked more than 34,000 teens how they feel about everything from drugs to alcohol to sex to school violence, as well as the effects of September 11th. Some of the more encouraging statistics reveal that a whopping 99 percent of teens don’t think they need to take drugs to have a good time, and that 54 percent of teens have a positive body image.

Although parents might feel a sense of relief from these positive revelations, it was also discovered that only 17 percent of teenagers think that their school offers effective safeguards against students entering or leaving the building armed. Nine of 10, in fact, feel that a shooting similar to the one that occurred at Columbine could happen at their school.

Jane Rinzler Buckingham, teen expert and founder of Youth Intelligence, a consulting firm dedicated to observing and explaining common thoughts and behaviors



Most teens, a recent survey discovered, feel good about themselves and their looks.

of American teens, has developed a list of guidelines to help parents “decode” their teens. She also offers insight on how to better talk to them about the serious issues they face daily. Among her recommendations:

- Start any conversation with your teens by assuming they’re “good” and not bad. Assume the best about your teens and they may surprise you.
- Don’t try to equate your teen life with theirs. Certain issues stay the same, but a lot of the world has changed, so you should definitely “hear them out” on issues.
- Let them know that they won’t get into trouble for being honest. They’ll never be forthcoming if they think they will be yelled at or punished.
- Offer other people for them to talk to. Let them know that you just want to make sure they are getting good advice (from a coach, counselor, aunt, etc.) and that the person they feel most comfortable with might not be you.

You can learn more about questions to ask your teens, as well as review results from over 34,000 teen responses to the Teen Attitude Survey, at www.herbal-essences.com.