

# Perspective

by John Leonard

Listening recently to a group of parents (Mom's, specifically) discussing the challenge of dealing with the drama that gets created by their teenage girls, much of it fueled by an incomplete understanding of human interactions and artificially both "sped up" and "widespread" due to all the electronic communication tool every teenager seemingly has access to....I was struck with the "counter-points" that need to be taught to teenagers, pre-teens, young adults and related "young folk."

Without going all "Hillary Clintonish" on you, it did strike me that it takes a combination of parents, teachers, coaches and better informed peers to work on educating our young people on this...if not "it takes a village", it certainly takes a good number of friends.

What would constitute some of the parental/coach "**talking points**" that would address the self-absorbed angst of those challenging years? Here's my personal "short list". Please enhance it with your own.

#1. Look at your issue within the overall context of your life. (This is called "Growing Up".) The fact that Billy ignored you in Math Class does not mean that your life is "ruined". Nor does Mary being mean to you in study hall rise to that level....these are MINOR distractions that you are allowing to control your emotions and your temperament. Why give ANYONE that much power over you? Don't you want to become independent? Actually, you have a roof over your head, food to eat, your life in a great country and a family that loves you. Get some context here, people! NO BIG DEAL. Your life is actually pretty OK. (or a lot better than that.)

#2. Recognize the marvelous stuff going on around you. Appreciate your surroundings, the talented people you are with every day and take some time to "smell the flowers". There is far more light than dark in your life. (for most of us.)

#3. Reach out to others. One of the tried and true ways to "feel better" is to help someone worse off than you are. Reach out, get your head out of your own problems.....and do something that helps someone else. It creates instant Perspective.

#4. Associate with people who are positive and upbeat. Hang around with doom and gloomers, and you'll soon become one. Look at the good side when you can, speak only with good intent, act by doing random acts of kindness and see how quickly it is returned to you. If all you do is hang out with people complaining about something, pretty soon you'll think that's normal and right. It isn't. What's right is DOING something to fix your problems.

#5. Every problem comes with a chance for you to challenge it, and GROW. Get better, Get stronger. If it was a struggle to get food to eat, you'd soon become very creative about getting food. Stop whining and get creative about resolving your issue. Accept and learn to enjoy the challenge of life. You'll face it every day. Better get used to it and get a good attitude.

#6. "Chop Wood, Haul Water" – the rural Chinese say that 99% of life is the mundane task... "**Chop wood, haul water**". American TV shows life as an endless series of exciting, dynamic, thrilling ACTIONS. Not so. Most of life is mundane....interrupted by moments of sheer joy and sheer terror. Get

used to your version of "Chop wood, haul water". Learn to enjoy the rhythm and essence of your daily life and realize that without the mundane the special wouldn't be so special. And having "special" all the time is NOT what it's cracked up to be. (witness all the unhappy and dangerously ill Hollywood stars.....who may be living very "special" lives.....not a prescription for happiness is it?)

Unhappy teenager? Simplify your life. Turn off the electronic stuff once in awhile and get outside and experience the real world. Focus on what you can DO for others, not what they do for you. Find something you love and engage in it fully.

Parents, remember, your goal is strong, independent children. Every time you do something for them that they should do for themselves, you make them weak. Give them the opportunity to grow. It's a great gift from Parent to Child. They need psychological tools to cope with the world. My top 6 are above. Teach them your own.