

TEN THINGS YOUR TEEN WON'T TELL YOU

...or why it's hard to be a
PG teen in an R-rated world.

by Colleen L. Reece

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One of the most difficult tasks many parents face today is keeping the lines of communication open with their adolescent children.

No longer “children” in the narrow sense of the word and not quite adults either, adolescents are often a mystery to their parents (as well as to themselves).

Here is a short list of things they may want to tell you but probably never will—at least not now or not directly.

1. Walk in my combat boots.

Every time I step out the door, it's like walking into a war zone. You tell me sin has been around since Day One, but it couldn't have been anything like this. When you were my age, at least kids *knew* they were doing something wrong. My world preaches that it's up to us to decide what's right and wrong. The only thing sinful in today's politically correct world is to *not* do your own thing or to be intolerant of someone else's lifestyle.

Some of my friends, even those from good homes and religious backgrounds, tell me, “Trying marijuana or booze is no big deal,” or “If you're really in love, it's okay not to wait for marriage.”

You've taught me better, and I'm hanging in there. Yet if you walked in my shoes, you'd understand that it's hard to be a PG teen in an R-rated world.

2. My holdout span is limited.

Read my mind. I can't always express how thankful I am for parents who won't let me do everything I ask. It wears pretty thin when I keep making up my own excuses about being a no-show at after-event parties. When you say “*absolutely not!*” it takes the monkey off my back.

It's okay to ground me when I mess up. It shows me you care. I might gripe (that's part of being a teen), but I'm secretly relieved to have an out.

3. The world is strange and I'm afraid.

You used to drive my monsters away, but now I have different ones. I'm scared about not becoming class treasurer or not making the debate team. I think about guns at

school and drive-by shootings. My friends' parents are getting divorced, and I wonder if one day I'll have to choose between the two of you.

4. I can't perform on demand.

Just because I'm good in football or drama doesn't mean I can perform in the living room. I'm not being moody; I just need the band behind me. Putting on a helmet or stage makeup gives me security. Maybe you could invite those people who care about the things I do to a football game or a school play. I'll do a good job there, and you will be proud of me.

5. Don't be embarrassed if I don't respond the way you hope I will.

I wish you wouldn't get all apologetic when I mumble hello to Uncle Wilbur and then turn into a zombie. You don't know how hard it is to field remarks like, "Hey, Josh, you've grown a foot since I last saw you!"

When I say, "No way. I still only have two feet," I don't mean to be rude. I'm tired of hearing the same thing for the bazillionth time, and I don't know how else to respond.

6. Please don't compare me to others.

I don't like being compared to others, especially within the family. I gag every time someone asks, "Are you a swimmer like Hannah? She was so *good*." So what? She's Hannah and I'm me. Regardless of what people might think, we are not Siamese twins.

7. I can't like everything you think I should.

Dad, you about had a cow when I mentioned not trying out for baseball. What I really wanted was to learn photography and practice my tennis. I want to learn how to walk my path instead of simply following yours.

8. Handle me with care.

Last week I heard you bragging about how I had everything so together. Ha! I've never felt more fragile. Everyone can see my zit-covered face and how my body is changing. Have you read the articles about teen depression and suicide that I left by your chair? I'm not considering *that*, but I do feel very alone. I miss the notes you used to put on my pillow. I'd like to read one telling me you're here for me if I ever do figure out what it is that's bugging me. I may not act like that note is important, but it would be.

9. Let me be my own age.

I'm in a no-win situation right now. Sometimes you treat me like a child, but when I act like a kid, you tell me to grow up and behave like an adult. You say I'm hard to live with. Well, try wearing my skin for awhile.

I wish I were 18 and out of here. Or maybe I'd like to be a little kid again. Too bad God doesn't simply let me skip all those years between 8 and 18.

10. Role-model Jesus for me.

Don't be shocked when I question everything you've taught me, especially God, Christ and faith. It isn't enough to tell me Jesus makes a difference. I need to see it. Paul told Timothy to be an example "in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

Mom, Dad, I know it's hard. That's the 11th and most important thing I wish I could tell you. I really do know.

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