



*Dr. Liz*

## PREPARING YOUTH FOR LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS

**P**arenting teens is extremely difficult because parents have to walk a fine line between giving their teen independence while simultaneously providing appropriate structure, discipline, and guidance. Although a teen needs some space to make choices, they still have to abide by rules. You actually have to be more involved in the life of your teens because they are more independent. You should know their friends, set curfews, and know their whereabouts when they leave the house. Don't be afraid to ask them questions and make them accountable for their actions.

Most parents are hard-wired to protect their children from harm's way and have an innate desire for them to be happy and successful. Over-protection, however, can prevent young people from learning how to develop problem-solving skills and resolve conflicts in a productive and powerful way.

Parents must be willing to step back at times in order to allow their children to sort out situations with friends and to create alternative solutions to problems. Of course, you are always available to step in when needed but your children, especially teenagers, need room to grow and develop. They also need the chance to practice all the skills that you have taught them.

This generation of youth has grown up in a fast-paced technology driven environment in which everything is at their fingertips. They are involved in organized activities in which all participants are given a trophy whether they win or lose. Unfortunately, many of them have not been given the appropriate skills to manage and overcome failures that occur throughout their lives.

In light of this new era, parents need to teach their children that it is all right to fail. They need to know that making mistakes and learning from them are the keys to success. Donnie McClurkin is right on the mark when he sings, "we fall down but we get up." Our children have to know that it is okay to fall down as long as they use their fall as a catalyst to catapult them forward by leaps and bounds. Parents can teach this by sharing how they have dealt with their own mistakes. They can also open up the lines of communication by discussing ways in which their children can learn from their own so called "failures."

It's difficult for the best of kids to stay on the right track. There are huge pressures to look good, act cool, and be accepted. Drugs and alcohol are accessible in our schools and neighborhoods regardless of your socioeconomic background. It can be very easy for young people to get involved with the wrong crowd or to go against everything they were taught and



Healthy Possibilities for Youth

give into peer pressure. Drug and alcohol addiction doesn't just affect the "bad kids." It can take the life of any child.

It's important to discuss your views about drugs and alcohol use with your child and to listen to their views no matter what they are. Use situations that occur on television shows to open up a dialogue about the issues of substance abuse. Have them role-play situations in which someone asks them to try using a drug or drinking alcohol.

It is essential for young people to know that they are loved unconditionally for who they are and what they can contribute to the world. They need to know early on that their individuality is what makes them unique and that they matter. This emotional support is no less important to the well-being of an adolescent than providing food, clothing, and shelter. It creates the foundation for their future success.

### *About Dr. Liz*

Dr. Elizabeth Henry (Dr. Liz) has dedicated her life to providing youth with the knowledge and confidence to lead healthy and productive lives. She is the founder of Dr. Liz Consulting, a practice focused on making a difference in the lives of adolescents by addressing their physical, emotional, and mental needs. Teens, tweens and their parents can find resources on how to build self-confidence, manage anger and stress, and overcome issues such as bullying, emotions, fitting-in, and obesity at [www.DrLizForYouth.com](http://www.DrLizForYouth.com). Dr. Liz can be contacted at [DrLiz@DrLizForYouth.com](mailto:DrLiz@DrLizForYouth.com).

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