



Wise Minded Parenting: 7 Essentials for Raising Successful Tweens and Teens

Laura Kastner with Kristen Russell

Who among us hasn't wished for the "do over" button with our teen or tween? I know that if I could just go back in time, I could be a much better parent to my kids the second time around. How many times have I gotten 2 hours into an argument with my teen, only to wish I had taken a different approach? Alas, we don't get the chance to do it over. Further, many of us wonder if we can survive parenting our tweens and teens and come out the other side with an intact relationship. Kastner assures us that not only will our relationship survive, but that we can help our teens and tweens become competent, caring, connected adults of character and confidence.

Laura Kastner's latest book, Wise Minded Parenting, 7 Essentials for Raising Successful Tweens and Teens offers parents a workbook style approach to parenting in these difficult years. The book is full of tools and exercises that will help improve parenting practices at home. Kastner defines Wise Minded Parenting as "balancing both sides of your mental equation: rational thought and emotion." Wise Minded Parenting is the art of staying positive in negative situations and WISE becomes an acronym for tough moments with teens.

Imagine that you have told your daughter, "No" when she's asked to attend a non-supervised party after Friday's football game. She is coming unglued.

W: Wait. When your kid comes at you with a negative comment or a defiant stance, resist the urge to react immediately. Get quiet and observe your child objectively. "Wow. She's mad and she's saying she is going to the party, even though I just said no."

I: Investigate. Get in touch with and calm your own emotions before you deal with hers. "Wow. My heart is racing. My stomach hurts. I am really mad. Deep breath."

S: Say validating things. Before you are ready to write Kastner off, validating does not mean agree. "You are feeling frustrated because you can't go to a party at an unsupervised house. You think I am unreasonable. You feel like your life is too restrictive." All we have to do here is make the child feel heard and (as hard as this is) ignore the attitude she is bringing to the situation.

E: Evaluate: What is the most realistic goal in this moment? It might only be not to make this fight worse. It probably isn't realistic to expect that she understands your point of view or sees the logic in your answer. At this point, you end the conversation on a positive note, "I'm sorry you are so upset but that's our house rule." And leave the situation.

She poses this question to parents in the middle of an emotional scene with their teen: "*You may be right, but are you effective?*" This question challenges parents to keep their logical mind in check and their eye on the prize of helping their child come out of an emotional moment feeling supported and with as little damage to the parent/child relationship as possible.

Kastner defines the 7 essentials of happy, healthy teens as follows:

1. Secure attachment to parents
2. Self-control
3. Academic Success
4. Social Thriving
5. Emotional Flourishing
6. Strong Character
7. Physical Health

She devotes a chapter to each of these essentials and within each chapter offers parents a chance to reflect, read supporting research, and develop action plans to take baby steps with their child if this is an area that needs work. Further, within each chapter, key points are bulleted and boxed in gray, both as a reminder and as a touchtone for skimming readers. A recurring theme in each chapter is the importance of routines and habits to build success in teens. Whether or not you are working on character building, or academic success, putting habits and routines in place provides a framework for the development of these characteristics.

This book is a must read for all parents of teens and tweens. As in her previous book, **Getting to CALM**, Kastner's wise-minded, realistic, science-supported approach to parenting teens and tweens is encouraging. From the beginning to the end, Kastner's years as a therapist working with teens and their families shines through. She understands the chaos of teens, embraces it and wants to walk next to parents as we learn and grow in our own parenting.