



May 20, 2008

Parental Wisdom – Emails

Reverse Engineering the Teenage Brain

"When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years." - Mark Twain

I believe there is a place called Parent Heaven, and you can get there by accomplishing certain milestones:

1. Going to a Chuck-e-Cheese party twice. I say twice because the first time you have no idea what's in store.
2. Attending a 4th grade recorder recital
3. Raising a teenager

There is a way to have a not too terribly bad time of raising teens (how optimistic a statement is that?) It helps to understand what is going on with the teenage brain, so you can prevent or at least minimize the very foolish mistakes that seem to come with the territory.

Start when they are young, as young as three, to begin building a relationship with your child. The relationships you build when they are age three to age ten will serve as a solid foundation for things to come.

The National Institute of Media and the Family presents research in this [video](#) where they explain the brain is a very advanced electrical system with the potential of making one quadrillion connections (not an exaggeration). Babies are born with 17% of those connections made. Two things effect successful connections; genetics which you can consider hard-wiring, and experiences which you can consider soft wiring.

We can help our children with the soft wiring by giving them positive experiences as we counter the many negative influences that surround us. For example, when media content is presented that we find questionable, use that as a teachable moment for your child, and use the opportunities that present themselves related to sex, drugs, and the mistakes that others make as a conversation entry point.

Let's face it - for all teenagers, a right of passage includes making some very dumb mistakes. But when we were teens, there wasn't someone standing over us with a phone camera ready to post the entire experience on You Tube. Today, mistakes are very costly - preventing them is key.