



Keys to Enjoying Your Teenager

- ❖ **Take time away from your teens.** This seems like a joke, but absence in this case can make the heart grow fonder. Don't worry about being with them all the time or "working through things" until they are completely resolved. Think *marathon*, instead of *sprint*: visit the aid station along the way (stop and rest when tired; find friends and other parents to talk to, use one- or two-session "check-ins" with a family therapist or trusted colleague or relative who isn't in the immediate picture), take lots of water and food breaks (literally, make sure you eat well, get water); think distance, not time.
- ❖ **Remember what teens are facing:**
 - Teens are facing enormous social, cultural and political challenges;
 - Teens have a lot of pressure and very little power;
 - Teens aren't generally respected or listened to;
 - Teens don't get to play freely anymore;
 - Teens are separated from simple affection with everyone;
 - Teens lack models of genuine leadership;
 - Teens in our culture (depending upon socio-economic status) don't really have responsibilities that deeply matter, inside or outside the home.
- ❖ **Remember what teens are needing:**
 - Your teen needs you as an ally, a champion and consultant: He/she needs to know, above all, that you believe in him or her;
 - Your teens' troubles have to be separated from your own troubles;
 - Learn to listen, rather than talk first, with your teen; wait a few minutes before saying anything. Don't respond right away when asked for advice. Teens talk when they feel SAFE, not when you want them to;
 - Assist teenagers in dealing with strong emotions by dealing with your own strong emotions positively (positive self-talk and self-care, taking breaks, "accurate optimism");
 - Teens do better with everything when they feel good about themselves. Approach them with a positive explanatory style because it helps them stay on track, dealing with defeat and helps you get practice with focusing on what's positive in trying situations.
- ❖ **Knowledge is power. Know what is developmentally and temperamentally appropriate** and normal for them—not only for teens in general, but for your teen. This will help you not take as personally some challenging, annoying and troubling behaviors.
- ❖ **Remember to retranslate what your teen says and does.** Their behavior rarely means what it suggests on the surface. Think sideways, not head-on.