



Smells Like Teen Spirit -- Relating Better with Your Teen

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Smells Like Teen Spirit --

No, not the deodorant, silly!

- “Smells Like Teen Spirit” is the first hit single from the band Nirvana
- This song was an anthem for Generation X and gave “Grunge” music its start
- This song also came to represent the anger, confusion, and angst that are so pervasive in the teen years and early 20s.



Angst & Adolescence



- The character “Harold” of Harold and Maude is a perfect example of confusion, angst, and ennui
- He struggles to search for his identity and find something meaningful in a world of meaninglessness.
- He is dissatisfied with his life despite “having everything”, he struggles with depression, and is very morbid.
- He creates melodrama as a way to deal with his everyday life



Angst & Adolescence



- The movie Heathers is also an excellent example of teenage angst
- It is a dark comedy from 1989 that is overflowing with the stresses and issues from the teen years – being “cool”, fitting in, drinking, dating, sex, bullying, cliques, eating disorders, suicide, pop culture, etc.
- The character Veronica explains the unexpected drawback of being in the “in crowd” -- “My parents wanted to move me into high school out of the sixth grade, but we decided to chuck the idea because I'd have trouble making friends, blah, blah, blah. Now blah, blah, blah is all I ever do. I use my grand IQ to decide what color lip gloss to wear in the morning and how to hit three keggers before curfew...”





Drama



- Urban Dictionary's Five Signs of DRAMA:
 1. If you only listen to one side of a story, and then form your opinion, you might be a DRAMA member.
 2. If you take sides when two of your friends are fighting, which only adds to the DRAMA, you might be a DRAMA member.
 3. If you don't talk to someone because you're mad at them, you might be a DRAMA member.
 4. If you worry more about what other people are doing, instead of focusing on yourself, you might be a DRAMA member.
 5. If you continuously gossip, or talk negatively about total strangers in a social setting, or talk about someone behind their back (whether it be friend, foe, or strange), you might be a DRAMA member.



Drama in Our Lives



- Popular culture not only accepts drama, but embraces it and promotes it.
- T-shirts, key chains, bedroom décor, etc. that proudly display “drama queen”
- TV “dramas” that highlight drama – Desperate Housewives, Sex in the City, soap operas, etc.
- Reality TV shows that are built around and showcase drama – MTV’s Laguna Beach & Real World, VH1’s Flavor of Love & I Love New York, The Bachelor, Big Brother, etc.





Drama TV with your Teen

- Watch TV with your teenager and talk with them about the unreality of “reality shows” (e.g., Sweet 16, Laguna Beach, The Hills, The Real World, etc.) and how unhealthy the drama is.
- Other topics of discussion:
 - the ways people communicate with each other
 - problem solving skills (e.g., passive-aggressive)
 - coping skills (e.g., avoidance, acting out, etc.)



Keys to Relating to Teens



- Know your pop-culture
- Know your technology
- Know your terminology
- Be cool (but don't try to be so cool that it looks fake)
- Check your emotions
- Get the right attitude
- Make it fun
- Focus on the relationship



Know Your Pop-Culture



- Popular TV shows
- Popular Reality shows
- Music
- Videos
- Movies
- Celebrities
- Websites
- Lingo
- other?



Know Your Technology



- Social networking -- MySpace & facebook
- IM -- AIM, Google Chat, etc.
- texting
- Live it, learn it, love it! Know it to protect your kids
- Know the abbreviations; do you know these?
 - LOL
 - LMAO
 - P911
 - TDTM
 - WTF



Know Your Terminology



- Do you know what the following words/phrases mean?
 - On the DL
 - Off the Chain
 - Shawty
 - Ballin'/Pimpin'
 - Guap
 - Cakes/Cakes for Days



Essential Websites



- Google
- youtube.com
- urbandictionary.com
- internetslang.com, noslang.com (internet slang, drug slang, translator)
- IMDB.com
- wikipedia.com
- songlyrics.com, azlyrics.com, lyrics.com, etc.
- songmeanings.net, lyricinterpretations.com





It's All in the Attitude

- Check your emotions
- Be “blasé”
- Be positive – staying positive keeps kids more positive and most kids do better with a positive focus than a negative focus
- Be “cool” – sometimes it is more important to talk openly with your child than it is to consequence them. Being cool makes you more appealing to talk to.



It's All in the Attitude



- Emulate the dad in the T Mobile cell phone commercial
- Let go of rules sometimes (teach the lessons that you want to teach, but be able to let go sometimes)
- Don't take yourself too seriously -- trash talking, "bad" language, etc.
- Have fun!



Decisions, Decisions



- Decide how you want to relate to your child by deciding what method is REALLY the most likely to have the positive impact
 - Is your method solely about teaching lessons and controlling their behavior?
 - Or is your method about improving the likelihood of a positive outcome by making a connection?
 - Examples of both? Outcomes?



“Been There, Done That!”



- You’ve been in their shoes and “been there, done that”
- Decide HOW you want to present that message to them --
 - “Been there, done that, get over it already”
 - “Been there, done that, yeah, man, that sucks”





Speaking the Same Language



- Try to talk to your teen in “his” language, not your own
- Determine what it is that your teen is asking of you --
 - It is usually either “I want you to fix this” or “I want you to empathize”
 - Parents typically want to “fix it”, but teens typically want the empathy



Use Pop Culture to Discuss Tough Issues



- Use pop culture like movies, music, scripted TV shows, reality shows, YouTube, blogs, etc. to facilitate discussion of difficult topics
- Teens are not only likely to connect to movies, songs, etc., but they are also more likely to address delicate issues and feel more comfortable discussing “characters” than discussing themselves directly



Pop Culture – Bullying

- Mean Girls
- Carrie
- The Craft
- Heathers
- My Bodyguard
- Karate Kid



Pop Culture -- Cutting

- Thirteen
- Secret Cutting (made for TV)
- Nine Inch Nails -- Hurt -- “I hurt myself today, to see if I still feel, I focus on the pain, the only think that’s real”
- Goo Goo Dolls -- Iris -- “Yeah you bleed just to know you’re alive”



Pop Culture - Suicide

- The Virgin Suicides
- Girl, Interrupted
- Heathers
- Little Miss Sunshine
- Dead Poets Society



Pop Culture -- Safety



- Abusive Relationships
 - Fried Green Tomatoes
 - Fear
 - What's Love Got to Do With It?
 - Enough
 - Sleeping with the Enemy
 - Tori Amos -- Silent All These Years -- "I got the anti-Christ in the kitchen yellin' at me again...been saved again by the garbage truck"
 - Current events – Rihanna & Chris Brown



What's the Bottom Line?

- Connecting, connecting, connecting -- kids will listen to what you want them to hear and really “get” your message, when you share it in the right way.





Recommended Readings

- Playful Parenting -- Lawrence J. Cohen, Ph.D.,
- Not Much, Just Chillin': the Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers -- Linda Perlstein
- What Stories Does My Son Need? -- Michael Gurian

