

## How Can You Prepare For The Teen Years And Make Them More Enjoyable?

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By Sarah J Newton It was funny, the other day I went into my children's bedroom and found them watching an episode of "My teen's a nightmare, I'm moving out"! It sort of took me by surprise, seeing myself on TV a few years ago, looking at the situation unfold before me - I had forgotten so much of it. Of course the children think the whole thing is hilarious and find great delight in saying, "Mummy you say that at home, Mummy you make that noise when you are cross with us"... However, the most shocking thing for me was watching the parents and the teenagers interacting and seeing in a moment of blinding light the problem... a problem that somehow I missed when I was doing the programme...it was the difference in basic needs. If, as parents, we could grasp this concept before the teen years, then I think they would be so much easier. Let me explain it to you. In William Glasser's Choice Theory, he explains that in a relationship we have five basic needs and if our needs differ from that of our partner, parent, teacher etc., then we will be unhappy and our behaviour will become totally irrational. Most relationship problems are due to the struggle between what your basic needs are and getting them met in that relationship. So what are they? The first is survival, and we are very lucky in the modern Western World that this need is met, however, if this were not the case, then it would override all others. If we suddenly lost our home and were out on the streets with no money, then the fact that our teenager may answer back in a less than desirable way would seem unimportant. The next need is love and belonging. As human beings we all want to feel loved and we want to belong. Failure to find love may top the human list of misery. However, our need for love and belonging will differ from someone else's, and this is where the challenges can begin. For example, I love to feel loved, yet I am not a very loving person and I have a very low need to belong. My eldest daughter has a high need for love and is constantly kissing and cuddling me, which I can find too much. Instead of making her wrong for that, or thinking she has a problem, I can explain to her that her need is greater than mine and that we need to respect each others needs. She is fine with this and, since my husband need is so strong, she gets this met. It helps us understand each other more. My youngest is like me in this respect and when she started school, she spent the first few months sitting a few metres away from any other child. While the teachers thought she had a problem, I just knew she had a low need to belong and was exercising her right. She has now found her own way with this and has realised that if you don't belong, you have no fun (which is a high need of hers). This need has a huge impact in your child's school life, a child who appears to not mix may not have low self esteem, just a low need to belong and a child who is always out with friends may not hate their parents, but have a massive need to belong. It may also be important in the way they approach the family unit. If you have a high need to belong and your child does not, then you may always be trying to get them to do things as a family unit and they may be resisting that. The next is without a shadow of doubt where a lot of the teenage problems occur and that is the need for power. Now, my enlightened moment in the bedroom while watching the TV show was about power. Both mother and daughter had a massive need for power. Mum is trying to keep daughter in and daughter wants to go out, hence war breaks out. Mum is sure there is something wrong with daughter and daughter feels powerless, as no one is listening to her or thinks what she has to say is important. I think that during the teenage years, the need for power does increase within them as they seek their own identity and independence. They need power to do this, they need to exert themselves. If, as a parent, your need for power is very high, then unless you figure out some solutions, there will be problems. Now I am not saying you have to give up your power and give it all to your teenager, you just need to think in a different way. A relationship with your teenager is not about always winning, always being right and getting them to do what you say. If that is how you treat the teenage years, then you will have an interesting time ahead, to say the least. Power, I think, is in essence the power to be seen and heard and I don't think teenager are seen and heard enough in today's society. We want someone to listen to what they say. If no one listens to us, we feel the pain of powerlessness, the kind of pain you feel when you are in a different country and no one can understand you. I think what we must remember most is that we are the adults and it may be us that have to back down. The next need is the need for freedom, which will again differ for each individual. Mine is extremely high, my husband's quite low and it is generally a need that will only bother us when we perceive it is threatened - hence why grounding is never really a good way to go. If you are a parent with a low need for freedom and your child has a high one, you may not understand their insistence in being out of the house night and day and similarly, if you have the high need and child has a low one you may be going mad trying to get rid of them, wondering why they are still clingy. The key here is just awareness. The last one is fun and is certainly very high on my agenda. If it ain't fun, then I ain't doing it... and believe me, children who are high in this will most likely have report cards that are say things like, "does not concentrate... never takes things seriously". My response may be, "so what?" We all need to start understanding that people want different things and we cannot treat all teenagers as robots. What is I think so interesting is the way that all these needs are linked. Survival wipes out all others, although someone who wants more power could override survival, for example, in anorexia. Power destroys love and you have no power if you do not belong and are not loved. When we are loved we have fun and feel free and people with power can take these away. I mean, I could go on forever... but I won't. So what can you do? First you need to be very clear where you are with these needs, score yourself 1-10 with 10 being high and 1 low, truly understand your need levels. Then look at how you act daily, observe yourself for a week and see how these needs come into play. How do they help and hinder you? What are your partner's needs, your child's needs and how does knowing that help you? How could you act differently with this information to hand? What could you put in place that would help everyone get his or her need level met? At the end of the day, really it is all about communication. You must communicate this information and then help your loved ones reach solutions that feel great for all. &nbsp;

### About the Author

I will be including coaching and information on this in both of my new group coaching courses, beginning in February. Sarah is Britain's best known

teen coach due to the high profile she enjoys. She is the only Teen Coach to have hosted her own eight part TV series 'My Teen's a nightmare - I'm Moving Out' and has been seen on most channels with one of her programmes being watch by 1 in 4 of the UK population (not that she's bragging). Sarah is the media's first choice when it comes to Teen Experts and being interviewed by national newspapers and magazines has become part of this northern lasses routine. Sarah's first book, 'Help! My Teenager is an Alien - the everyday situation guide for parents' was launched in March 2007 and rarely drops out of the top ten parenting teenager books. Sarah has just learnt that her book is to be translated into Polish which is great news however, she is slightly nervous that her strange sense of humour will not translate so well. :-)

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