

Incorporating Life Skills into Your Parenting & Lifestyle PART 2

To recap, Part 1 of this article explained how you can understand your teen's thought-process and behavior patterns so you can make sure the important life skill information you teach them will be delivered in a way that they will understand, process, believe, commit to and respect.

Let's peel another layer off that concept!

To understand your teen's thought-process in a meaningful way, you first have to understand their perceptions. You do not have to agree with them to understand where they are coming from in a situation. However, if you start to pay attention to their perceptions then you just might find that you can relate to them. You may still disagree as a parent but you empathize:

"I understand why you want to go to that party, but I just cannot allow it after the last party at that house. I'd be a bad parent and a bad friend if I said yes because the chances of rape, accidents, or crime at that kind of a party is very high. I love you too much. Let's find a win-win, what other social event do you really want to attend soon?"

OR

"I understand all your reasons for wanting to go to school there. Your happiness is important to me. I'm sad we can't afford the school you want. There are other options though so let's think creatively about alternative funding so you can go to an out of state school. If it does not work then we'll make sure you get to go on out-of-state summer activities and work-study programs."

It's hard to have empathy, appreciation and respect for their choices, attitude and behavior if you do not understand THEIR perception of:

- their* life
- their* immediate surroundings
- and the world at large

Without seeing their perception the first quote above might go like this: *"You are not going to that party. Those people are awful and if they get you involved in bad stuff, don't count on me to bail you out because I've warned you."*

This quote is understandable from parent-to-parent. But what is it really telling the youth? That we don't understand their wishes; that their friends are "awful"...which may be true but it is an unnecessary choice of words; and nothing was said about wanting to protect and love the child – instead it showed we have no faith in them and they are likely to end up in jail with these friends. Again – maybe these are all true statements but that way of communicating is only going to build bigger barriers between us and the youth. And this is why understanding their perspective is so important. Read on...

Empowering Words to Gain Peace, Wisdom & Clarity
Articles by, W.W. Snodgrass

Step 2 – Understand their Perception

Below is an overview of why parents might not relate to their teen’s perspective. Why are parents so surprised or angry when their youth does something to completely shock them or something that seems out of character? If you looked at things from their perspective, many times we’d see what they did, said or how they feel is not actually that surprising. **Note:** This table intentionally portrays the disagreeable side of youth. We know some are very clean and others love to cook or travel with their parents, but within each family there are usually areas where the parent just can’t relate to the teen’s perspective **because we think we share the same reality.**

Topic	Youth’s Perspective	Your Perspective	Why it’s different when you share the same reality.
<p>Family finances</p> <p>You live in the same home and everyone’s lifestyle privileges are about equal so why can’t they see what you see?</p> <p>Or your youth’s other parent lives separately and might compare the two household finances, which is an entirely different problem.</p>	<p>Why can’t I have x,y,z when I behave, and/or get good grades, and/or make good social choices?</p> <p>Why don’t my parents just make more money?</p>	<p>As a parent I owe my children: love, shelter, food and clothes. Everything else is a privilege and s/he has plenty of luxury items.</p> <p>Sometimes you might think, “If they only knew how many vacations and luxury experiences I have given up so our family could have other privileges!”</p>	<p>The teen is not financially responsible for the household and therefore, they would not see why your new computer, which helps run your business and the household – might be more of a financial priority than their weekend out of town with a friend. “Everyone has computers – they can’t be that expensive.” Is probably what the teen thinks.</p>
<p>Keeping a clean room</p>	<p>I’m always on the clock so I rush myself and make messes instead of cleaning as I go.</p> <p>Yes, I make time for my social life because I need balance because I’m always working in school; on homework; at sports; and at my job, ...it’s exhausting!</p>	<p>I keep a clean home and set good standards. Why is it so difficult to clean up after yourself?</p> <p>Your priorities are wrong- you have plenty of free time when it’s something <u>you</u> want to do.</p>	<p>Nature v. Nurture? Sometimes kids are messy because their parents are and other times it’s just part of their personality – the mess doesn’t bother them; it bothers you! And sometimes they are just busy. We forget school is work and a teen social life can be exhausting.</p>
<p>Curfew</p>	<p>The more I’m trusted the more I’ll be trustworthy.</p>	<p>The more you’re trustworthy, the more I’ll extend trust.</p>	<p>The good ol’ chicken or the egg scenario.</p>
<p>Sightseeing/ Traveling</p>	<p>Traveling with family doesn’t serve my immediate needs</p> <p>My family does not really know me...I can’t be myself in a car with them! I have to watch my mood, my language and I can’t talk about friendships and romance in front of them. They do not relate to me.</p>	<p>Why doesn’t s/he see the beauty of these travel experiences?</p> <p>I’m trying to spend time to get to know you.</p>	<p>Age, education, background, and priorities.</p>
<p>Cooking</p>	<p>Cooking food isn’t important to my schedule right now. Isn’t that the parent’s job?</p>	<p>You must learn how to provide for yourself. You’ll be on your own before you know it!</p>	<p>Need and priority</p>

Discover their perception of:

1. The world at large
2. Their world, where they live, the people in their life, how they live
3. Their perception of self

Ways to discover their perception:

- They tell you
- You observe objectively
- You begin working on life skill training now (before they are in the real world) and engage in Step 1 and Step 2 simultaneously. As you engage with them you'll observe their thought processes and be able to guide them through their evaluative thinking.

I have three activities on perception for you to do with your teen or class. Please [email](#), call or text me for a copy.

How to observe thought processes:

Opportunities to observe your teen will not happen in an organized list of categories but for illustration purposes I will give examples in the same format that we categorize life skills in our program. These are presented in the next article titled 'Part 3'.

Note: I am not teaching life skill activities in this article. This information is more of a guideline to help you prepare and begin your own methods of life skill teaching, while also improving communication with your youth and hopefully, building a closer or more meaningful relationship.

Get.in the.Game is always available if you choose to enroll in GITG programs or activities or hire me as a Life Skill mentor.

Some of you may already use this method of teaching.

Others might teach "how to" technical information as a form of life skills, without giving them the tools of critical and evaluative thinking; self-esteem; assertiveness; and time/organization skills.

If your family is already achieving everything I'm discussed, please stay tuned and come back for more technical information you are sure to love in future articles.