



Dr. James Dobson

SOLID Answers

Q. My 16-year-old daughter is driving me crazy. She is sassy, noisy, and selfish. Her room looks like a pigpen, and she won't work any harder in school than is absolutely necessary to get by. Everything I've taught her seems to have gone in one ear and out the other. What should I do?

A. The most important thing you can do for your daughter is to just get her through it. The concept is a bit obscure, so let me make an effort to explain it.

Imagine your daughter riding in a small canoe called *Puberty* on the Adolescent River. She soon comes to a turbulent stretch of white water that rocks her little boat violently. There is a very real danger that she will capsize and drown. Even if she survives today's rapids, she may be caught in swirling currents downstream and plunge over the falls. That is the apprehension harbored by millions of parents of teenagers. It's the falls that worry them the most.

Actually, the typical journey down the river is much safer than believed. Instead of the water becoming more vio-

lent downstream, it eventually transforms from frightening rapids to tranquil waters.

What I'm saying is that I believe your daughter is going to be OK, even though she is now splashing and thrashing and gasping for air. Her little boat is more buoyant than you might think.

Yes, a few individuals do go over the falls, usually because of drug abuse or some other addictive behavior. But even some of them climb back into the canoe and paddle on down the river. Most will regain their equilibrium in a few years.

Q. Should children be taught to treat each other with respect?

A. Absolutely. One of the values children cherish the most is justice. They are uneasy in a world of injustice and abuse. Therefore, when we teach children respect for each other by insisting on civility, we're laying a foundation of human kindness in the world of adulthood to come. It is a fundamental attitude that should be taught in every classroom and every home.

Q. Is it possible to love someone and not feel it?

A. It certainly is - because love

is more than a feeling. It's primarily a decision. Couples who misunderstand this point will have serious problems when feelings of love disappear for a time. Couples who genuinely love each other will experience times of closeness, times of emotional distance, and times when they are irritated and cranky. That's just the way emotions operate. A couple's source of constancy must be a commitment of the will. You simply make up your mind not to be controlled by fluctuating and unreliable emotions.

These questions and answers are from the book *Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide* published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Dr. Dobson is founder and chairman of the board of Focus on the Family, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of the home. His daily radio program is heard on more than 1,400 radio stations in the U.S. and Canada. If you would like a copy of the radio broadcast listing or Focus on the Family magazine (both are distributed free of charge), write Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995 (www.family.org) or Focus on the Family Canada, Box 9800, Vancouver, BC V6B 4G3 (www.fofc.ca).

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