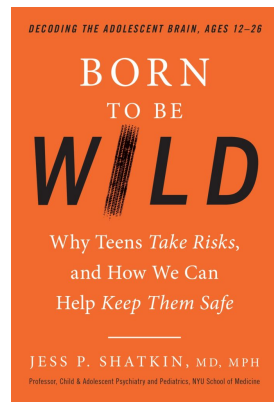




Adolescents Are Born to be Wild!

3 Oct, 2017 in Books by Nina Lewis



(Note: I was given a free copy of this book to review. However, all opinions are my own.)

Raise your hand if you have ever been a teenager.

Raise your hand if you have ever had teenaged children.

Raise your hand if you either currently know any teenaged kids or have known teenagers at some point in your life.

I think that this pretty much includes everybody.

And have either you (when you were a teen) or they done some pretty crazy and wild things? Things that could have possibly been dangerous?

I dare say that you or they have. And, either you, your parents, or parents of teens have probably at times figuratively thrown their hands up in the air in despair saying, "What in the world were you thinking?"

I know I have done that.

Jess P. Shatkin wrote the book *Born To Be Wild: Why Teens Take Risks, and How We Can Help Keep Them Safe*. He provides information that helps parents understand why kids do things that could potentially be dangerous. And the best thing is that he tells what parents can do to reduce the chances that their teens will take risks.

First, I want to mention that Shatkin is a medical doctor. He knows about the brain – the medical terminology for the regions of the brain; the medical terminology for how it works; the medical way of how the brain and its function affects human behavior.

What I'm getting at is that as you read the book you will get a doctor's explanation of things.

But don't let that scare you!

The book is written so that the lay person (that means regular parents) can easily understand what he is saying.

That being said, this is an excellent book that describes what is happening in an adolescent's brain, how it affects his behavior, and provides advice for parents to navigate their child's turbulent teen years.

Shatkin explains several key things that affect why teens take risks. (This is by no means all that he shares!)

- The 'emotional' part of the brain develops before the 'rational, logical' part of the brain so many times teens' decisions are made in emotional moments. (The rational part isn't fully developed until the mid-20s.)
- Dopamine production increases in brains during adolescence. That increase makes teens more likely to take risks so that they can possibly experience more pleasure. (Dopamine is a chemical in the brain that affects emotions and sensations of pleasure. It is released by things such as drugs and alcohol.)
- Teens are sensation seekers.
- Teenagers are hormonally driven. (Don't we all know that! But! I didn't know the following.) Testosterone is a social hormone that makes adolescents more concerned with how they're perceived by others. Oxytocin helps teens bond with others and helps them determine who is "in" and how is "out." It also increases aggression and defensiveness toward members outside of a teen's peer group. (That explains why girls are so mean to those not in their social clique!)
- Stress of peer relationships spike intensely for teens. They care deeply about what their peers think about them. Studies show that almost of all this increase in stress was due to feelings about the opposite sex.

Now that parents know this info, what can they do?

I'm so glad you asked!

I'm going to briefly share just six of Shatkin's suggestions.

1. Provide positive reinforcement by praising 'how' to behave instead of how 'not' to behave.
2. Give effective commands. Command, not ask, and be specific. (Of course you don't do this harshly or in a yelling voice! Even tempered and a normal tone of voice is best.)
3. Help your teen manage their time. Be realistic about getting homework done, limiting screen time, and getting enough sleep.
4. Establish limits and consequences for teens when they do not behave as we request.
5. Teach adolescents to think about the pros and cons of any given choice BEFORE they act. Prepare your teen to plan responses on how they will act before they find themselves in risky situations.
6. Together, identify 'red alert' situations (ones where your teen needs to GET OUT!) that your teen will likely face. Together, develop a plan for your teen to do everything possible to avoid those situations before they happen.

A huge takeaway from this chapter is that it is critical that parents start using these methods when their children are young. That way, their children's behavior will be greatly improved.

By far, the common parent needs



every

Of course you'll have to read the book to get the full information about what drives a teen to risky behavior and for all of the information on what parents can do to help teens avoid that behavior.

I recommend that you get your hands on a copy and give it to your children who have children of their own (your grandchildren) – whether those children are toddlers or teens but ESPECIALLY if they have teens. This book has information that can be a great tool in successful parenting!

You can purchase a hardback copy of *Born to Be Wild* on Amazon for around \$18 or a Kindle version for \$14.

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