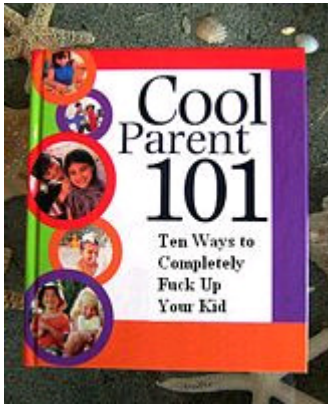




Written by bubba



Ugh...Here we go again...stupid parent tricks. I think this is the third installment on this site, maybe only the second. I at least know we kicked this off with a post about parents who sleep with their children. Either way, I seem to have a wealth of resources for this topic so I'll consider making it a recurring article here in the Daily Grind.

Before getting started, I'll issue my standard disclaimer – I've not yet been subjected to the stresses involved in parenting a teenager. Yes, it is possible (though unlikely) that one day I will find that all my criticisms of parents that put their needs before their kids needs, pontificating on the importance of parent-child communication and diatribe about how I've got it all figured out may come crashing down on this ornate little castle of idealism that I envision to

be the Nunnery Household. Maybe one day I'll just buckle under the weight of social acceptance and say to my fifteen year old *"Hey Ava, saw the report card. Great job getting straight C's! How about a little celebration shot with your dad! Vodka Stinger still your poison of choice?"* Sure, maybe that will happen. Unlikely, but maybe.

This all stems from last weekend when some friends of ours let their fifteen year old son go to a senior party at a home where it is publicly known that the parents supply kids with alcohol. I won't belabor all the in's and out's of the related discussions we've had because they're friends of ours, but I will say that they were pretty confident that their boy would be able to make responsible decisions if put in the position of having to do so. And I should add – this is an excellent kid we're talking about. He's intelligent, extremely well behaved and able to separate right from wrong. But he's fifteen. Enough said.



So they (the parents) were at our house, their son was out carousing and so it went. Next day, all was good, only new news was no news. The party was low-key, son was home early, had a great time, others were bad, he was good, etc... But then, later in the week, there was an update. My wife heard by way of someone else that our friend's son had actually been drunker than a rodeo goat on a weekend leave at that party and was running around and making out with anyone who cared to reciprocate. In fact, the story actually held that their son is *always* drunk and running around making out with anyone who will reciprocate. Surprising? Not to

me. Sounds like footage from my teenage years. But there was an issue – we'd heard something that, if true, this boy's parents should know about...at least that's what we thought. We'd want to know about it if we were his parents. All this prompted a short but meaningful talk about how we should handle things.

I have to add something here – something horribly judgmental and critical, if not uppity. This particular couple isn't extremely creative or consistent in the discipline department. Mom is a yeller and an over-reactor. Dad keeps perspective on right/wrong and has more of a level head, but has a short-term memory when it comes to making and implementing the tough decisions and sticking to them. Right or wrong, these are some of the things we discussed when trying to decide what the best next step for us should be. The other consideration was that we believe their son is a good kid, a normal kid with a foundation for knowing the difference between right and wrong. That doesn't mean he walks the fine line, right? But it means he knows about the line. Finally, we talked about the fact that



we weren't present at the party. We had no way of knowing if the story was true or not and, at best, it was already third party information to us. Now – some more uncomfortable commentary on our friends - We were afraid that if we were the bringer of this (unconfirmed) news, mom would be embarrassed and feel the need to put on an exacerbated show of parenting for our benefit. Dad too. Would that be helpful? Depends. I would think the kid needs a talking to and yes, maybe a foot in the ass, but tactfully executed. After much deliberation I felt as though my wife and I had probably put 10x the thought into how the situation should be handled than the parents would do themselves. That's a problem.

Anyway, we didn't tell the boy's parents because we thought they'd over-react. Should they? Maybe. But maybe not...we weren't there, right? He'd surely have been punished versus get a talking to is what we thought. Then again, maybe he wouldn't have. In his family, there is a lot of yelling and harsh words when conflict arises, but it has a short half life. I've never seen a punishment last more than a couple days, if not a couple hours, in that house. So instead of calling his parents, I called up the youth whose behavior is at the center of this discussion and had a private, one-way conversation with him. I told him what I'd heard and what I thought - that because I wasn't around, the right thing for me to do was share with him what was being said out in the community. At the end I added that I didn't think it was my business to spread 3rd party information any further than who the gossip was being said about (implying that I wouldn't tell his parents...yet) but that if I heard the story more than once, it would probably mean that there was something going on that needed some attention. At that point, it would make sense for me to tell other people, right? *Right*, he said. He got the message.

In fact, not only did he get the message, but I think he got more than I was telling him. Either it seemed unbelievable that I wouldn't tell his parents or he just felt guilty, but he opted to go to his parents on his own and give a watered down rendition of the events from the party, adding that he'd 'tasted beer' while he was there. Great. So there I am with a big giant foot in my mouth because his parents know that he and I have talked and that I didn't tell them the story first. But what came after that is really what has fueled this particular post. How did the parents react? They drank the Kool-Aid. The next time we spoke, our conversation was chock-full of all the reasons that it was ok for their fifteen year old son to be drinking at senior parties. I was shocked to say the least. We've had countless conversations about this very topic with this couple, have (together) been highly critical of parents who allow their teenagers to drink and openly discussed what kind of groundwork needs to be laid to help kids deal with this sort of thing on their own.



Talk about disappointing. Today I am reminded of all the idiocy I have observed since moving to this encapsulated little slice of Americana called Ohio and how much of that idiocy is cyclical, actively or passively passed from one generation to the next. What do I do? It's not like I'm going to end a relationship over how some friends of ours choose to parent their kids. That's their right, right? What to do, what to do... I mean, where I live, the notion of kids-will-be-kids and 'we don't really have an influence on that process' is widespread. Tons of parents thinks this way. What am I supposed to do about it? *Frustration*. But then finally, an idea.

To deal with my frustration, I decided to jump online, get into some parent-to-parent advice rooms and throw out some bait in an effort to pick a fight with anyone representing the irresponsible parenting ideals that were eating at me. Below are some of the highlights, condensed for readability. But I don't want this to be merely a spectator sport, so consider the following an open letter to all you parents who resist putting in place responsible boundaries with your kids. Maybe you'll learn something as I systematically dismantle some incredibly immature rationale for parenting like a peer instead of parenting like a parent.

Attention Cool Parents: *You are not really cool. You are wildly out of touch with your role as a parent and the true needs of your kids, both short term and long term. Somewhere along your own life chronology you have become socially arrested and now you are benefiting psychologically from the approval of teenagers. Get a grip!*

I didn't go to college and I turned out fine. Clearly that's not the case. And the course you missed the most, Insight 101, is probably never going to be offered again in your lifetime. I don't think you can even audit that class at a community college and, even if you can, it probably overlaps with the NASCAR summer schedule so you're fucked. I don't know what else to say about this. You don't know what you don't know I guess. I don't think you have to go to college to turn out fine, but the implication here is that you don't think advocating higher education to your kid is that big of a priority. It is. It's not about where *you* came from. It's not about how *you* improvised, overcame and adapted in the face of adversity, it is about you using all information about your past and all current information available to make a map for *your child* that steers them down the path of the least resistance towards things that will help them to be better people, better parents, have more opportunities and an increased quality of life.



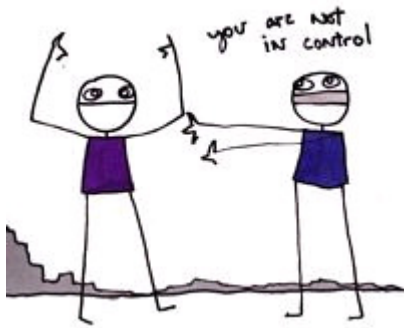
We drank when we were that age. Yes, me too. A lot. And I did steroids for sports. Then in college I got high a fair amount. I feel like an expert now. Can't wait to tell my teenagers how normal they are when they compound the use of multiple drugs and alcohol. Idiot! You're not supposed to be rationalizing your kid's reckless behavior and your irresponsibility as a parent with your own good fortune that things didn't turn out worse. When your kids are adults and impenetrable to peer pressure and on their way to becoming parents themselves you can share all the secret tricks of the trade that you used to keep them on the straight and narrow. Until then, you lie about what you did when you were their age. You have no obligation to arm them with your own history of being a risk taking jackass. You tell them you never touched drugs, walked away

from people who chided you about not being cool, ended up getting the hot chick in the end because you showed backbone and resolve. In other words, you lie. Lying about your own behavior to steer them in the right direction is a smart move to reach the end goal. Telling the truth about what you did to feel better about yourself and to avoid having to be a standout parent is a copout. Finally, bonding over similar irresponsible teenage behaviors means that you are at the same level as your child – the teenage level. Congratulations on never growing up. Remind yourself please that IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU ANYMORE. If you can't stand up to other parents, for example the parents that prompted this post, and tell them what they are doing is wrong or, better yet, report them – you are acting in your interest and not the interest of your kid or any other kid for that matter.

P.S. - *To those of you chomping at the bit to suggest that lying to your kids about your own behavior is somehow amoral and therefore hypocritical in the context of a diatribe about being a good parent I say KEEP YOUR FUCKING EYE ON THE BALL. Your job is to arm them with information and support and teach them to be insightful, strategic thinking and strong enough character-wise to walk away from unsafe situations when you are not around anymore.*

If they're going to do it, I'd rather them do it at home, where I can keep them safe. When exactly did staying home with clueless, parents with no boundaries become 'keeping them safe'? Why not have 'Teenage Coed Orgy Night' at your house this year too? Seriously, if they're going to fuck, wouldn't it make the most sense to hose them all down in the driveway and make sure their genitals are clean, offer a popcorn dish full of rainbow colored, multi-textured rubbers and order up some pay-per-view porn as an icebreaker? Hell, maybe you and your wife can give them an in vivo sex demo to get the party started. No use in them having to recreate the wheel when you guys can offer hands-on training about pulling out, oral sex technique and the fine art of achieving the Eighth Posture of the Perfumed Garden. Fucking moron.





Kid's are going to do what they're going to do. Well fuck Chuck, can't dam the flood with only two fingers in the dike...may as well throw the towel in now. I say, put a chilled Jagermeister machine in your teenagers room, pack condoms in the glove box of the new Mustang you buy him for successfully getting a 2.0 grade point average and offer four tabs of ecstasy for every hour past curfew that they come home late on a school night (providing they haven't dropped out yet). What the hell is wrong with you?

I know everything my kid does. You don't even know everything *you're* doing or, more importantly, *why* you're doing it. I love to ask parents like you if you think *your* parents knew everything that was going on with you. Most say no way, which highlights extreme egomania (e.g. only you can get away with anything, only you are all-knowing of their kid's behaviors, etc). Others say *probably, but they were very wise about it*. Wise? Basically we've got one of three options here:



- 1) Your parents knew and did nothing about it. Irresponsible fucks.
- 2) Your parents didn't really know (kind if like you don't really know) what their kid was really up to.
- 3) (my favorite) They really knew everything, but kept a (secret) watchful eye to make sure that their kid's blood alcohol never rose above .05, blood hormone level never went beyond heavy petting between the hours of 9am and 6pm and within 15 paces of a legal guardian and that they were never subjected to a brownie recipe that called for in excess of a quarter ounce of Himalaya Gold skunkweed. Good job parents! Idiots. Denial. Idiots.



My kid and I are best friends. Well that just makes all the sense in the world considering that you are behaving at the maturity level of thirteen year old. Just out of curiosity, what is it you think you're able to offer your kid by channeling your parental role through the maturity of a pre-pubescent teenager? Way to dumb yourself down versus growing them up. Failure.

Alright, let's at least try and make this a bit productive. Here is some homework from me - the judger - to you - the failure: Take a look at your life, we're going to do an assessment. Kind of like the tests you used to self-correct in your last completed grade (7th), you won't have to share your results with anyone else. That's to help promote brutal honesty...so you don't have to be embarrassed, but you do have to think. Ready?

(This is all about your life.) Are you happy? (It's not a yes/no answer we're teasing out so shut the fuck up and stop being so defensive.) Now...are you happy? Are you where you want to be relationship-wise? Is there enough room in your house for everything? Are there things you wish you were different? Ever feel like you missed anything huge in your past? How about the opportunities you're able to provide your kids, and I'm not talking about making sure they have designer tennis shoes...they going to be able to go to college? If you can't afford to pay for it yourself, do you know enough about financial aid to teach them? How about this, do you talk about the benefits of education enough to motivate them? Do you even know the benefits? Can you get the jobs you want? Have a retirement plan? How do you feel about what you have taught your kids thus far? How do you think they'll do when you're not around anymore? Do you take responsibility for the errors they make in their lives? Is it more important to you that your kids wear brand name clothes or that they get good grades? (I know everyone will answer this one as a no brainer, but does your behavior support as much?) Remember, you don't have to share with anyone.

So there you have it. Two hours of chat time, at least a dozen new enemies and a five page soapbox speech from me, the guy without a teenager. I feel better about things. Check in with me in fourteen years. Maybe you, me and my teenage daughter can laugh about this over a beer. Maybe some other interesting things will have taken place by that time as well.



Close Window