

NPEN Response to YouTube Parenting Video: For the Troubled Teen

The video posted on February 8, 2012 *Facebook Parenting: For the troubled teen* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl1ujzRidmU>) has received over 25 million views and has sparked heated debate about what constitutes “good” parenting. It also served as a rude awakening to the role media may serve as a vehicle for dealing with family conflict. The video entails a father reading a Facebook posting by his 15-year-old daughter in which she expresses anger and resentment at her parents for demanding too much of her vis a vis household responsibilities which culminates in the father taking out a .45 caliber handgun and discharging multiple hollow point bullets into her laptop.

For NPEN, a national organization whose mission is to support parent educators and the field of parenting education, this video raises some very important overarching issues that need to be addressed:

- Parenting is the hardest job one will ever have—it is no small feat to raise healthy, happy and successful adults. Children don’t come into this world with directions—nor should they—as every child is unique, and raising them is a complex, transactional back-and-forth process between parent and child. The experience of parenting is very emotionally intense and conjures up all the “ghosts in the nursery” we bring to our role as parents—the feelings and experiences from our own upbringing. Consequently, when the expectable challenges arise during the course of childrearing, parents need and deserve easily accessible, universal access to parenting information and support. Indeed, in interviews following the posting of this video, the father volunteered that he could use help in this arena. He is not alone.
- All parenting education should include helping parents develop the skills of self-awareness and self-control. Parenting arouses our deepest feelings—fierce love and a need to protect, expectations and dreams for our children, and memories of our own upbringing. Without the ability to identify and manage the feelings that get elicited through daily interactions with our children, parents are at risk for being reactive, which is rarely an effective strategy, especially when it comes to parenting teenagers.
- There is not one “right” way to parent. Judging families tends only to alienate vs. engage them in effective problem-solving around childrearing challenges. While we don’t know this family and cannot/should not speculate on who they are or what has led to this distressing event captured on tape, what is clear is that both father and daughter feel some sense of desperation and are

crying out to be heard and understood. Their feelings and challenges are not extraordinary (talk to any parent of a teen). The inflammatory nature of their approach is. From a parenting educator's perspective, a family who is experiencing this level of anger and resentment towards one another would greatly benefit from the support and guidance of a professional in parenting and child development who could help them find ways to effectively communicate and work through their issues, especially around how parents can be effective limit-setters without having to resort to aggressive, threatening actions.

We offer the following list of resources that address issues raised in this video. They have been recommended on the listserv by fellow parent educators. Please note that NPEN does not endorse or promote any of these resources. It is up to you to evaluate their value.

- ***Yes, Your Teen Is Crazy*** by Michael J. Bradley, Ed.D. and ***Scream Free Parenting*** by Hal Runkel, LMFT (Rhonda Moskowitz)
- ***Raising Teens*** by Rae Simpson (Therese Ockenden & Eve Sullivan)
<http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/?q=worklife/teens-young-adults/raising-teens>.
- Research from Brené Brown on the negative effects of shame (Kathy Slattengren)
- ***Discipline Without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible, children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery*** by Judy Arnall (Judy Arnall) It has a teen section, a parent anger section and lots of scenarios of active listening and problem solving.
- ***Parenting from the Inside Out*** by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell (Claire Lerner) This book explores the extent to which our childhood experiences shape the way we parent. Drawing upon new findings in neurobiology and attachment research, the authors explain how interpersonal relationships directly impact the development of the brain, and offer parents a step-by-step approach to forming a deeper understanding of their own life stories to help them raise compassionate and resilient children.
- Perry Aftab's website, <http://wiredsafety.org> (Liz Pearce)