

Teenagers
these are the
HARDEST
years of your lives

A million years ago when I was a Youth Pastor, the one encouragement that I constantly gave to the 8-18 year olds in my youth group was to remind them that these were the HARDEST years of their life and that everything gets easier and easier the older they get. This was the kindest and most helpful thing I ever shared with them.

I did more than repeat this message. I proved it constantly.

Many of my “kids” in my youth group are now in their 40s & 50s and I am still close with almost all of them. They have come back to me many hundreds of times to tell me how much it helped them that someone told them that the years 8-18 are the HARDEST years of a person’s life.

They tell me how that was the one light of hope that got them through some dark times.

Before I went into ministry, I studied sociology in college and considered becoming a sociologist. I used some of that education and background to help my kids.

I generally focused on three major pressures that 8-18 years olds face that no adult will ever again face.

1. The Open Environment of School

I explained to them that the whole sociological aspect of “*School*” was a level of cruelty that was only equaled in the prison system.

I explained that the first day of college they will be shocked to realize that “*Real Life*” never involves hundreds of same age people thrown together with lots of free time and very little supervision. In the adult world your entire life as an adult will be spent in very small groups.

After you leave high school, you will never again face the pack of rabid attack wolves that people call “*School*”.

In the adult world people CHOOSE their own small groups and find immense SAFETY in each small group. Their entire adult life will be spent exclusively in small groups of people.

It is only the most vulnerable and weakest 8-18 year olds that we throw into the cold crushing torment of being permitted to be persecuted by their most vicious and sadistic peers in a huge open environment of hundreds. Once they pass the age of 18, they will never again face this open environment where it is free hunting on the weakest.

Surprisingly most people never tell kids that school is NOT Normal Life!

Young people are very smart. Once they understand that this is a weird sociological experiment created for maximum suffering and that it forever ends once they leave high school they can find the grace to endure.

2. The Sprinkler System of Volcanic Hormones

I explained to them their bodies and their brains go through more change in the years 8-18 than the next 30-40 years combined.

In their brains it is like an exploding volcano in a sprinkler system. It BURNS everywhere it goes. Our skin burns at 118 degrees and yet volcanic lava is 1,300 to 2,200 degrees. In the same way, these hormones burn through our minds and emotions.

I explained to them that their emotions will be more extreme and confusing during this time than the rest of their life combined. They will feel hate, love, depression, anxiety, frustration, and yearnings at levels that feel like their soul is being ripped apart from the inside. In other words NO ONE can fully handle the entire hormonal bath of the years 8-18.

Some of these emotions need to be legitimately processed but a LOT of these emotions are simply the results of these volcanic hormones bursting all over your brain in different directions.

As a parallel, I explained to them that I also did marriage counseling.

Most teens know the real reason why their parents argue. Teens can see that their parents often only argue because they were tired and grumpy. They could see that the “*Subject*” over which they were arguing was not the real issue.

In the same way, this helped the teens to see that some of their painful emotions were not because of the situation, but because of their raging hormones.

This gave them hope that life was hard now, but was going to get easier as their body eventually calmed down.

3. Three massive life decisions looming in their future!

Once they pass 13 or 14 years old, every teen feel the impending doom of the avalanche of these three mountain sized boulders rolling toward them. Very soon they must:

- i. Separate from their parents – usually very painful and messy.
- ii. Find a career – Terrifying!
- iii. Find a new family – even more terrifying!

Never again in their entire life will they face such massive decisions in such a short span.

Even worse than facing these decisions is the anxiety that comes from knowing these decisions are coming and not knowing what to do.

One Obvious Conclusion → Don't TRUST your Emotions!

In the end, as a young person, I ask them to learn one massive wisdom lesson from all of this pain. That lesson is to please do NOT trust your own emotions.

I tell them that if they can learn this lesson during this HARDEST time of their life, then they will be extremely successful, wise, and prosperous as adults.

When you learn to NOT TRUST your emotions, you learn:

1. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that you really **HATE your parents**
2. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that you really **HATE your Sibling**
3. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that you are so **DEPRESSED that you want to die!**
4. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **this person's ABUSE makes you LESS**
5. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **ANGER makes you Stronger**
6. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **FEARS have to happen**
7. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **Pleasure can Satisfy**
8. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **Putting down someone else makes you better**
9. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that you can **NOT recover from a Broken Heart**
10. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that being **KIND makes you Weak**
11. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **Skipping work makes your life Easier**
12. Although it feels so real ... It is **NOT** the **truth** that **Lying helps you Avoid Problems**

These are just a few small examples.

When you learn to always **SIFT** your emotions on the basis of **TRUTH**, you will have certain words attached to your name. You will be called:

- **Faithful** - *true to one's word, promises, vows, etc.*
- **Dependable** - *worthy of trust; reliable:*
- **Honorable** - *in accordance with or characterized by principles of honor; upright:*
- **Wise** - *having the power of discerning and judging properly as to what is true or right; possessing discernment, judgment, or discretion.*

May these words describe your life!