

PARENTING FOR THE LAUNCH

A GROUP STUDY FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

**By Dennis J. Trittin, CFA
and Arlyn J. Lawrence**

**Developed for use with
*Parenting for the Launch:
Raising Teens to Succeed in the Real World***

**© 2016 LifeSmart Publishing. All Rights Reserved.
www.lifsmartpublishing.com**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
NOTE TO FACILITATORS	5
SESSION ONE: Parenting Perspectives	6
SESSION TWO: One of a Kind	9
SESSION THREE: How to Talk to Your Teenager	13
SESSION FOUR: College and Career	16
SESSION FIVE: Off to a Great Launch	20
CONCLUSION	24

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Since you have embarked on this study, you are likely nearing the “launch pad” of your parenting career—that season of life where the infant you once held in your arms will soon be launched into the “real world” of independent living.

Are they ready?

Are *you* ready?

No NASA launch ever takes place without excellent planning; obviously, the more thorough the preparation, the more likely the launch will be successful! Unfortunately, parenting doesn't lend itself to precise scientific calculations as with a rocket launch—parenting is much more organic than that. In fact, parenting can be one of the most ambiguous, confusing, frustrating, and heart-wrenching endeavors we can undertake—especially during our children's teen years. At the same time, it's also one of the most exciting and rewarding!

It is both a calling and responsibility to raise children. Though it's never easy, we need to do our best to honor that responsibility. When we do, we help mold, shape, guide, and empower our children to fulfill their dreams and purpose. What a tremendous privilege! Granted, it's a nail biter at times (to put it mildly). But when you see your eagle soar—there's nothing like it.

We all want our adult to children take the love, training, and wisdom we've invested and channel it into successful living. We want to see them thrive! The problem is we don't always know how to get there with our sanity and relationships intact. Launch time is a challenging season for all involved, on multiple levels.

When our kids were small, we were likely involved in preschool groups, parenting groups, co-ops, and other environments where we received support and input. Most of us read the latest books on how to be a great parent. We interacted with other parents about topics such as potty training, how to get our kids to eat their vegetables, and dealing with childhood illnesses, woes, and fears. But it changes, doesn't it, when we they reach the teen years? The support groups tend to evaporate as children get older and involved in so many activities. Parental attention becomes more focused on extracurriculars, homework, and chauffeuring. Plus, when our children are older, they have their own sense of self awareness and rights to privacy that make it inappropriate to share our personal struggles with other parents. This can sometimes make parenting teenagers a lonely, isolated experience.

That's where *Parenting for the Launch* comes in. We've created this study to help you interact with other parents to gain the wisdom, inspiration, direction, encouragement, and support you need at this crucial time of life. It is our hope that you'll feel better equipped to cover the bases, build an enduring relationship, and set your teen up for a successful transition into adulthood. And, at the same time you're building their intrinsic leadership skills and preparing them for key life decisions, you'll be building your own ability to emotionally and practically let go with confidence.

We've both been in your shoes. At this writing, our two families have launched seven children. We know what it's like to feel the tension when a child starts pulling away to establish his or her own identity. We know what it's like to experience worry and anxiety as they start to make their own decisions. We know what it's like to feel the waves of emotion when we say our good-byes. But, we also know the joy that comes from seeing them live their dreams—an enduring “return on our investment” in them.

We can't guarantee outcomes for our children. But we *can* take the wisdom and perspectives from trusted voices and apply it to our situations. That's what this study is all about.

So, with that in mind, let's get started on our journey to the “launch.” We're excited to walk with you along the way!

With our best wishes for a successful launch,

Dennis and Arlyn
Gig Harbor, Washington
August 2016

NOTE TO FACILITATORS

The goal of this five-session study is to get parents interacting about the topics in each session. Along with the content provided, it's the encouragement and support from other parents that will impact your participants.

We encourage you to begin the first lesson by going around the room (if you have a smaller group) and asking people to introduce themselves and answer one or two of the questions in the "Getting Started" section. If you have a larger group, divide it into "huddles" of three to five in order to get through the introductions and questions in the suggested ten-minute time frame. On subsequent class meetings, each "huddle" can start right into their Getting Started questions.

Then, in the "Engaging the Topic" section, briefly review the main points with the larger group. Read (or relay in your own words) the opening narrative before dividing your group into their huddles for the discussion time. (As with any discussion groups, it's important that each participant allow time for everyone to share. And, in order to maximize the value of each lesson, we urge participants to complete their reading assignments ahead of time.)

Note: This study can be expanded to 10 sessions by taking two sessions to complete each of the first five lessons. In this case, assign only one chapter to read at home between sessions, and then divide the questions in that session between the two meetings.

SESSION ONE

Parenting Perspectives

Prior Reading: Chapters One and Two of *Parenting for the Launch*

Getting Started (Opening Discussion) 10 min.

WELCOME to the first session of this group study of *Parenting for the Launch*! To facilitate introductions and get started, spend a few minutes getting acquainted and learning about each other's parenting situations and experiences. Here are some questions for the warm-up:

1. How many children do you have and what are their ages?
2. How close are you to "launch time?" (i.e., how close to having a child graduate from high school and leave your home)
3. How are you feeling about your upcoming launch(es)? Do you feel your child is ready?
Do you feel ready?

Engaging the Topic – Parenting Styles and Goals 10 min.

Main points:

- Parenting style influences parenting outcomes and can contribute to giving our children either "wings" or "strings."
- We need to know what we're aiming for! There is much to be gained by looking ahead to the launch, taking on an intentional mindset, setting parenting goals, and working strategically toward those objectives.

There are many ideas about what constitutes "good parenting." Often, devoted parents apply what they believe to be time-honored principles, but with profoundly different outcomes. Even the most committed parents can raise children who struggle with independent living. Why? There are many variables, but two contributing factors can be parenting *styles* and a lack of clear *objectives*.

Our parenting must be geared toward that defining moment when they leave our home to start an independent life in the real world—the “launch.” Our responsibility is to raise them to release them, having intentionally trained and prepared them for such a time as this.

So, how can we parent so they soar in adulthood, accomplishing their dreams and purposes? How do we help them develop wings when our own fears and expectations can unwittingly give them “strings?” How do we help them develop an honorable definition of “success” and empower them to achieve it? These are questions that must be answered—and solved—if we are to raise and release real world-ready kids.

Conversation (Discussion in small groups of 4-8)

30 min.

Self-Evaluation: How would you assess your own parenting style and effectiveness in setting goals? What are some growth opportunities for you in this area?”

Supporting One Another: What suggestions/advice can you share with the group that have worked (or didn’t work) for you in these parenting areas?

There are two lasting bequests we can give our children.

One is roots. The other is wings.

~Hodding Carter, Jr.

Taking the Conversation Home

Take Away Assignment

1. Review the descriptions of wings- and strings-oriented parenting styles on pages 14-15 of *Parenting for the Launch*. Honestly appraise your own style.

2. How might you develop and apply the concept of a parenting or family mission statement for your household? Using the model on page 27 of *Parenting for the Launch*, come up with a core value and mission statement with your family. If married, include your spouse in this exercise. And definitely get some input from your kids!

Next Week's Conversation

“One of a Kind”

Assignment: Read Chapters Five and Six in *Parenting for the Launch*, “Value Your Teen’s Uniqueness,” and “Affirm Your Teen’s Immeasurable Worth.” Look ahead to pages 10 and 11 of this study and come back to the next session prepared to discuss the questions found there.

SESSION TWO

One of a Kind

Prior Reading: Chapters Five and Six of *Parenting for the Launch*

Getting Started	(Opening Discussion)	10 min.
------------------------	----------------------	---------

This session describes how parents can assess the unique personality traits in their children and in themselves, learning how those traits can both complement and challenge one another—and how this improves communication and understanding. Additionally, we explore how to promote self discovery and identity development in our kids, and how to discover and affirm their unique assets.

Here are some questions to begin your group conversation:

1. In what ways do you notice your children are different from each other? From you?
From your spouse?
2. Can you share any helpful ways you've found to discover and affirm what is special about your teen?

Engaging the Topic – Your Child's Uniqueness and Worth	10 min.
---	---------

Main points:

- Each child is unique and so is every parent and every parent-child relationship. Each family member has his or her own behavioral style, temperament, and idiosyncrasies that affect the others. Understanding this and using it to your advantage is essential for parenting, especially in the teen years.
- We must be students of our children's temperaments and personalities—the way they are designed—in order to honor their design and accomplish our parenting goals.
- The teen/young adult years represent the greatest period of self-discovery in life. As parents, we have the greatest platform and opportunity to support the process.
- At this crucial teen/young adult stage of life, when self esteem is fragile and volatile, a

“personal balance sheet” can help them discover their unique assets and opportunities.

If you have more than one child (or have known more than one child) you’ve probably realized that kids are just like snowflakes: no two are alike! Even twins can be profoundly different from one another.

We also need to be aware of how their unique personalities interact with our own. It’s important to understand that different personality and communication styles are not necessarily good or bad—they’re just different! The earlier we can incorporate this truth with our children, the better able we will be able to understand, value, and affirm them. And, we’ll be better positioned to build an enduring relationship and prepare them for a successful transition to independent living.

Each of us is an individual, with a profoundly unique identity and personality. Each person is precious, with immeasurable value. As parents, part of our job is to help “mine that treasure,” so to speak—to discover and cultivate the unique characteristics of our children and help them use those qualities to their greatest potential. At the same time, we need to be aware of the weaknesses that may accompany those character qualities, helping our children to overcome and minimize their constraints.

Conversation (Discussion in small groups of 4-8)

30 min.

Self Evaluation:

1. What would you identify as your (and your children’s and spouse’s) personality styles, according to the DISC model?
2. How do you think your relationship with your teen may be influenced by your respective personality styles?
3. What are some ways you could adapt your communication with (and expectations of) your teen, based on his or her unique design?
4. To what extent would you say your teen understands himself/herself, the unique assets he/she has to offer, and his/her opportunities in life?

5. Do you distribute your praise across all the asset categories or focus on a few? Which assets do you think could be better affirmed and developed in your teen? How might you communicate this in order to help develop his/her self confidence?

Supporting One Another: What suggestions/advice can you share with the group with respect to personality dynamics and self worth? What parenting strategies have (or haven't) worked for you and your teen?

Today you are You, that is truer than true.

There is no one alive who is Youer than You.

~Dr. Seuss

Taking the Conversation Home

Take Away Assignment

Help your teenagers develop their own “personal balance sheet”—a holistic understanding of who they are and the assets they have to offer. For detailed instructions, see page 105 of *Parenting for the Launch*. A complete assignment you can use with your teens is also found on our website at http://www.dennistrittin.com/resources/PersonalBalanceSheet_05-15.pdf.

Basically, the inputs should come from three sources:

1. themselves
- 2 other people (especially you!)
- 3 independent assessments where available (e.g., DISC, aptitude tests, etc. A good DISC test can be found free online at www.123test.com. We encourage you to take this with your whole family!)

By having inputs from multiple sources, they will have a much more comprehensive and accurate appraisal of themselves and vision for their lives.

Before this outside input is received, encourage your teen/young adult to develop his or her own list of assets and constraints. This way, he can see how differently (and narrowly) he appraised himself versus the way others see him—both affirming his views and revealing new assets and insights. This will offer tremendous encouragement, inspiration, and perspective to your teen.

When completed, keep a copy of your child’s personal balance sheet handy to remind you of your child’s immeasurable worth in those times where you might not see it so clearly in his or her behavior. Use it to point out those aspects of their personality, character, gifts, and talents that make them unique and special, *outside of their accomplishments and performance*. It’s especially helpful during those periods when their self esteem is ebbing.

Having an understanding of one’s worth and significance is one of the greatest gifts a person can receive. And, you can be the one to give it to them!

Next Week’s Conversation

“How to Talk to Your Teenager”

Assignment: Read *Parenting for the Launch* Chapters 7 and 8, “Communicate and Relate,” and “Know Their Third Party Voices.” Come to the next session prepared to discuss the questions found on page 14 and 15 of this study guide.

SESSION THREE

How to Talk to Your Teenager

Prior Reading: Chapters Seven and Eight of *Parenting for the Launch*

Getting Started	(Opening Discussion)	10 min.
------------------------	----------------------	---------

As children progress through the teen years toward adulthood, they experience a variety of changes in their bodies, minds, and lives. For one, their brains are undergoing rapid physical and hormonal changes that can drastically affect their moods, perceptions, and receptivity. Secondly, as their social spheres expand they are receiving considerably more input from external sources than previously received from just Mom and Dad. And thirdly, as they develop a greater sense of and desire for independence, they face more responsibility and decisions about how to think, act, and believe than ever before—decisions that will ultimately influence the direction of their lives and relationships for years to come.

These are high stakes so it's no wonder that tensions can run high between parents and teens! With that in mind, this session will focus on how to cultivate authentic, meaningful conversations with your teen, how to build and maintain trust, and how to recruit positive third-party influencers into their lives.

Here are some starter questions to get the conversation rolling:

1. How would you characterize the communication style(s) in your home when you were growing up? How has that influenced the communications in your home today?
2. Like author Dennis Trittin described with his own children, have you found a place and time that works best when conversing with your teen? Where (and when) is it?

Engaging the Topic – Communicating with Your Teen	10 min.
--	---------

Main points:

- The classic push-pull between parents and teens is a normal part of our children wanting

to establish their own identity and independence. Parents can choose to either resist or leverage this process by how they handle communication.

- Intentionally using the communication strategies found in *Parenting for the Launch* (pages 117-124) to build “relationship capital” with our children creates a platform of trust for speaking into their lives during good and difficult times. This can also help establish an enduring relationship that successfully transitions into a new parent-adult child dynamic.
- It pays to know and leverage the other positive voices in your teen’s life to minimize/compensate for any negative voices as much as possible.

There is probably no area of parenting with as much variety of blessing and challenge as that of communication. When it’s good, parenting can seem like a breeze. When it’s not so good, well . . . the word “challenge” only expresses it mildly, doesn’t it?

Parents and children have been experiencing communication challenges since the beginning of time. So, if you are experiencing turmoil in this area, be encouraged. You are not alone! With proper support, you can protect and, if necessary, redeem this very important component of a thriving relationship with our children.

Conversation (Discussion in small groups of 4-8)

30 min.

Self Evaluation:

1. How would you assess the quality of your relationship capital with each of your children? Which components are strongly in place and which could stand some improvement?
2. Whom or what would you say are the positive third party voices in your teen’s life? To what degree are you aware of and taking advantage of the positive ones? Which may need to be curtailed?
3. How are your communications adapting to your teenager’s growth and maturity? Which strategies work most effectively for you?

Supporting One Another: Review the suggestions in the section, “Communication Strategies that Empower and Influence” (pages 117-124) in *Parenting for the Launch*. Which work well for you that you can share with the group? What other methods do you use that empower and encourage your children?

*“Children may forget what you said,
but they’ll never forget how you made them feel.”*

Author Unknown

Taking the Conversation Home

Take Away Assignment

1. How would your teen view you in terms of approachability and availability? What changes can you adopt in order to improve this from his/her perspective?
2. How would you assess your relationship capital with each of your children? Look for specific ways to fill the “relationship bucket” with each one this week.

Next Week’s Conversation

“College and Career”

Assignment: Read *Parenting for the Launch* Chapters 3 and 4, “Build a Solid Leadership Foundation,” and “Prepare Them for Key Life Decisions” and come back next week prepared to discuss the questions found on pages 16 and 18 of this study.

SESSION FOUR

College and Career

Prior Reading – Chapters Three and Four of *Parenting for the Launch*

Getting Started

(Opening Discussion)

10 min.

During the teen years, all the questions of “What do you want to be when you grow up?” start coming home to roost. Choosing the course of their post-secondary education and their eventual career will heavily influence the trajectory and direction of your child’s adult life. So, it’s important they choose wisely! Selecting and thriving in an eventual career that matches their skills and interests will provide great personal satisfaction, a livelihood, and many opportunities for fulfilling their dreams and purpose.

Unfortunately, many educational establishments aren’t providing comprehensive guidance for students to make this all-important decision. Often, high schools don’t conduct aptitude and interest assessments or career fairs to give students direction prior to college or the workforce.

Also, many universities fail to provide complete career advice, including much needed access to practitioners. That’s why involved, informed, and engaged parents can play such a key role in their children’s success, both in education choices and training for success in the workplace.

In your small groups, take a few minutes to warm up to the topic of “College and Career” by discussing the following questions:

1. What do you think are the biggest challenges/decisions facing young people today as they make the move to post-secondary education and career choices?
2. Thinking back to your own college and career choices and work experiences, is there anything you would have handled differently? What did you wish you had known then that would have better prepared you for these decisions?

Main points:

- A significant part of our parenting responsibility is equipping our children with life skills for the “real world” and helping them build a **personal leadership foundation**
- Because post-secondary education offers new levels of challenge and responsibility, we need to prepare our children to handle this transition with self-discipline, strong study habits, and effective social and coping skills
- Career selection is one of the biggest and most important choices your teen will make; we can help prepare them to make a thoughtful, well-informed, and self-aware decision through discussion, research, and self-assessments

When our children were small, their “big decisions” amounted to picking out their own clothes and selecting their ice cream flavor at the carnival. When asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, we smiled when they answered, “Astronaut,” “Ballerina,” or, “Race car driver,” but now it’s getting to “show time” as young adults! The stakes are certainly higher—and the implications of their decisions far more serious and consequential. If teenagers only knew the white knuckles we parents experience as we help them navigate their life-altering decisions!

How can we help our children achieve their dreams and accomplish their life goals? How can we adequately prepare them to succeed in a rapidly changing, increasingly complex and competitive, and even sometimes hostile and dangerous world? For one, we don’t need to panic! Fear leads to all kind of parenting mis-steps and mishaps—such as helicoptering, control, performance parenting, overprotection, and more (remember the strings?).

* The LifeSmart Personal Leadership Foundation can be found on our website at <http://dennistrittin.com/resources/Personal%20Leadership%20Foundation.pdf>

Self Evaluation:

1. How would you assess your child's study and work habits, on an effectiveness scale of 1 to 10? How capable is he/she of managing academic and social transitions?
2. How well does your teen understand the key considerations for selecting a career and major? Do you know what career fields your teen is attracted to? Do you agree or disagree with his/her leanings?
3. In a theoretical job interview situation, what would you say are your child's strengths and/or weaknesses in a workplace setting? What skills or attitudes would you like to help him/her cultivate to succeed in interviews and on a job?
4. How well do you think your teen understands his/her own skills and interests from the standpoint of a potential career choice/direction?
5. What degree of attention have you given to these areas of training? Using the Parenting Checklist on page 199 in *Parenting for the Launch*, conduct a thorough self-evaluation and highlight any areas needed to cover the bases.

Supporting One Another: How many in your group have already had a child graduate from high school and embark on post-secondary education and career? What suggestions, advice, or experiences can they offer to help set up the others for success?

Taking the Conversation Home

Take Away Assignment

Find some quality time at a comfortable location to discuss upcoming decisions about education and career with your teen. Which areas is he or she most excited about when it comes to thinking about the future? Planning his or her education? Choosing a career? Having a job? Which areas is he or she most concerned about? What would help? Are there people you could introduce him/her to who could offer valuable insights?

This is not an opportunity to jump in with answers; it's a time to just hear your child's heart and listen to what is going on inside. Use what you discover to inform your future discussions. Ask for permission to have a conversation with him/her at a later date for further

discussion. The college and career planning process is the perfect opportunity for you to offer your affirming perspective of your son or daughter's unique assets!

If you need some ideas to share, here's a suggestion: from Dennis Trittin's book *What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead*, if you have a copy, read the chapters on "Post-Secondary Academics" and "Career Selection and Advancement." You'll find great tips you can discuss with your teen to prepare for success in these key areas.

Next Week's Conversation

"Off to a Great Launch"

Assignment: Read *Parenting for the Launch* Chapters 9 and 10, "Moving from Driver to Passenger Seat" and "Launch Time!" Come back next week prepared to discuss the questions on pages 20 and 21.

SESSION FIVE Off to a Great Launch

Prior Reading: Chapters Nine and Ten of *Parenting for the Launch*

Getting Started	(Opening Discussion)	10 min.
------------------------	----------------------	---------

A well-known parenting expert once polled his broadcast listeners to identify the greatest problems they faced (as adults) with their parents. He received a startling 2,600 detailed replies, and guess what the most common answer was? A whopping 44 percent said their greatest problem was the inability or unwillingness of the parents to release their grown children and permit them to live their own lives.¹ Strings in action! How unfortunate.

What has been your experience? In your discussion groups, start the conversation about releasing grown children with the following questions:

1. Have you started moving from driver’s seat to passenger seat in your child’s life?
2. What are some ways you have been incrementally releasing control and empowering your children to make more of their own decisions and assume greater responsibilities?
3. What have been some of your emotions, experiences, and challenges in this process?

Engaging the Topic – Getting off to a Great Launch	10 min.
---	---------

Main points:

- The most successful launches are marked by a move from chief director to chief encourager, and by the avoidance of worrying, “helicoptering,” and micro-managing.
- We prepare our children for independent living by incrementally releasing control, setting them up for wise decision-making, and empowering them with the wisdom and life skills they need to thrive in the real world. We also allow them to take risks and fail.
- There are several things newly-launched young adults need to receive from their parents, including unconditional love and understanding, belief and encouragement, affirmation of their uniqueness and value, freedom to live their own lives, a healthy and enduring relationship based on trust, an open door 24-7, and realistic expectations.

Ask any parent who has dropped a child off at college, boot camp, or a new apartment for the first time and they will likely tell you the experience hit them harder than expected. The emotions that can spring up at launch time can be surprisingly intense including feelings of fear, regret, uncertainty, and loss. Yes, there is much to be excited about! But at the same time, the stakes are high, for us and for them. This is good-bye to the way things used to be, and hello to a whole new relationship dynamic between our children and us.

This is where we cut many of the strings that often connect parents and children in their school age years:

“Clean your room.”

“Did you do your homework?”

“Be home by curfew!”

“Whose house are you going to and are their parents home?”

Where we once felt firmly in control of our children’s schedules, whereabouts, and study habits, suddenly we may feel out of control. And, actually, that’s as it should be! We’re not in the driver’s seat anymore; increasingly, they are. It’s going to be a whole lot easier—for us and for them—if we begin moving incrementally to the passenger’s seat.

Conversation (Discussion in small groups of 4-8)

30 min.

Self Evaluation:

1. Have you begun to incrementally release control and empower your teen to make his/her own decisions—even if it means he (or she) sometimes fails?
2. Do you believe your children feel unconditionally loved and affirmed by you? Why do you believe this?
3. How well prepared is your child to navigate the “four big changes” and avoid the common derailers described in *Parenting for the Launch*?

Supporting One Another:

1. Have any members of the group already launched children? What advice can they share for the critical first six months after “the launch?”
2. For moms in particular, are any struggling with a loss of identity in launching their children? Can others in the group offer ideas and encouragement for this important life transition, especially if a family will soon be experiencing an “empty nest?”

Taking the Conversation Home

It pays to start now, learning to incrementally release control and empower your child for independent living. Have you and your spouse or parenting partner discussed a strategy for equipping your child—and preparing yourselves—for the launch? (Even if you and your child’s other parent are not together, having a unified plan is still possible and a huge benefit for your child.) Now is the time to start making those vital deposits of wisdom and encouragement into your teen’s life, moving from driver to passenger seat, and positioning him or her for success in new environments after he or she leaves home. Here are some things to be thinking about and applying in the process:

1. Talk with your teens about the changes they will experience after they leave home (mentioned on page 178 of *Parenting for the Launch*). Discuss some successful strategies for navigating them, particularly coping and relational skills.
2. Work on building an enduring relationship that will transition from parent-child to adult-young adult. Carefully monitor your “relationship capital” with your teen. (Do you have a positive or negative balance in your “account?”) Time your delicate conversations strategically when they’re willingly engaged.
3. If you haven’t already, begin to incrementally release control by allowing more decision-making freedom and holding back on correcting, reminding, and overly “helping.” This is the time for you to move from driver to passenger seat in your teen’s life.
4. Speak positively about your expectation of their success and your unwavering belief in them. Avoid too much talk of “losing my baby” or anticipating out loud the tremendous

sense of loss you will feel. This can erode their confidence and lead to feelings of guilt over leaving home.

5. Review the list of “what they need from us” on page 180 of *Parenting for the Launch*. Which items on the list do you feel confident your child is already receiving from you? Which areas need improvement?

CONCLUSION

Parenting is a life-long journey, for sure. And, like any journey, it is marked by joys and challenges, changes in scenery, detours, dead ends, surprises, and more. We can't always see much of the road ahead, but every mile marker takes us closer to our destination: raising and releasing our children to live out their dreams and destiny.

As we empower and confidently release our teens, it helps to remember our own lives at that stage. Did any of us get it right the first time, in every area of life? Not at all. But eventually we learned how to cook for ourselves, do our own laundry, make our own schedules, manage our finances, make new friends, take ownership of our own journey, and overcome adversity. Our parents didn't know about all of the micro decisions and mistakes we made (thank goodness) and neither will you—or should you! We need to let them find their way, while always being there for sharing, caring, and advice as they seek it.

As your children enter the teen years, make every effort to prepare them and yourselves for the eventuality of independent living. Arguably, the greatest gift we can give our children as they leave our homes is the power of our belief in them. You prepare and you let go, knowing you've given it your best. It's as simple and as difficult as that.

Our best wishes to you on your journey!

ENDNOTES

¹ Dr. James Dobson, “Releasing Your Grown Child,” Dr. James Dobson’s Family Talk, <http://drjamesdobson.org/articles/families-on-the-front-lines/releasing-your-grown-children>, accessed October 15, 2014.