

Help Me With My Teenager!

Christina Botto

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Let's face it, being a teenager is difficult. But arguments, temper tantrums, and cold silence do not have to be the standard for parent-teenager interaction. Author Christina Botto learned it the hard way when her teenage daughter changed from a charming, biddable child to a difficult, opinionated teen. Botto responded by attempting to control her daughter's behavior, which subsequently deteriorated further.

Botto and her daughter stopped the downward spiral by opening an honest dialogue. They worked at finding compromises between the daughter's need to make more of her own decisions and Botto's desire to keep her daughter safe. From that point, Botto began talking not only to her daughter, but also to her daughter's friends, listening for the teenage point of view on just about everything. She eventually began acting as a mediator for teens and parents.

In her book *Help Me With My Teenager!* Botto puts forth the lessons she learned in order to help other parents who may be struggling with teen behavior. Her main point is this: teenagers are learning to make their own decisions, and parents have to give them room to learn. By expressing consistent interest in your teen without demanding answers, dropping what you're doing when your teen is ready to talk, and offering a calm sounding board rather than scolding when your teen makes a bad decision, you can build the trust level with your teenager.

Botto takes on such flashpoint issues as curfews, driver's licenses, and the perpetual messiness of teenagers' rooms, discussing how parents and teens can negotiate these issues without yelling. She offers both concrete strategies for diffusing tense situations with humor and advice about how to enjoy your teenager instead of battling with her. She also reminds parents to get to know their teenagers' friends, pointing out that you can't judge them by their clothes or attitudes. Your daughter's Goth friends may disparage drugs and alcohol while the clean-cut preppies are partying every night.

Botto's advice is sound, her tone friendly, and her strategies manageable. Written as it is by a mother rather than a mental health professional, *Help Me With My Teenager!* speaks in a clear and understandable language directly to parents. Some techniques, such as stopping whatever you're doing when your kid is ready to talk, will be difficult for already busy parents to implement. However, the extra effort promises to pay excellent dividends in the form of a healthier, more supportive relationship.

BookWire Review

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