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## **A Parent's Role In Teen Drama**

By: Mary Fagan

Never was there a story of more woe. Until the next bad grade, pimple, flyaway hair, wrong kind of jeans, snotty comment, dirty look, or dropped spoon in the cafeteria.

These typical examples of teen tragedy, comedies of errors played out in adolescence, prepare young people for their eventual adulthood. They learn to cope and conquer life's disappointments. What better way to begin that transformation than rehearsing with circumstances that don't matter one iota?

As the teenaged human brain is impervious to wisdom, it's best that parents not deliver many lines during a teen tragedy. This will be interpreted as plotting against them. But, teen tragedies can be re-written with happy endings using these subtle acts that most parents usually master by the time their second or third child is old enough to vote.

Act Serious. It's important to not to brush teen tragedies off too lightly. That emerging pimple just brought the world crashing down. Teens don't know that their universe is sized for Lilliputians, and all the perspective in the world won't expand it until they are ready. After a significant lapse of time, it is permissible to mention a true sad event or catastrophe, providing no comparative point of reference or level of severity. Conclusions are best drawn by anyone other than you.

Listen. When presented with a teen tragedy, your opinion doesn't matter. The sooner you understand this, the better. Just listening is a basic customer service skill you can use. Listen and repeat the essence of the complaint back to the complainant. This makes them think you are agreeing, but you're not. You are simply showing that you paid attention. Example: You think your teacher was mean to you because your homework wasn't done. DO NOT add any intonation, interpretation, excuses, advice, reasoning or justification if you know what's good for you. You will know when the time is right for that: They will ask you for it. (Don't hold your breath.)

Be Compassionate. Offer signs of your love and concern. Screaming out I love you as they walk to the bus could create even more tension, but a warm note tucked in a pocket or buying them a little something can help. Don't overdo this as you don't want to reinforce the idea that sharing a tragedy means a new outfit or electronic device. That gets pricey, especially during breakups and exams.

Pull Teeth. It is so much more meaningful to gently draw conclusions out of our teens rather than to blatantly offer direction. Asking if they can think of a solution is a beginning, but end it there. If you prod responses slightly, proceed with caution. This is akin to maneuvering through a minefield, and if you leave your advice out in the open, you could be dangerously close to hitting a nerve.

Show Affection. Parents of teens miss cuddling and the hugs and kisses they once took for granted. Because teen tragedy can cause fleeting vulnerability, it's a good time for parents to get a hug as much as give a hug. You never know how long it might be before you get lucky again.

Let Go. Due to their intensity, parents might blow a teen tragedy out of proportion and worry needlessly. This is farce. Placing a call to the agitated party an hour after your conversation usually finds them a tad annoyed and too busy to talk to you as they are in the middle of an ice cream cone or a movie.

Dealing with teen drama is inevitable, and one day their tragedies will be laughing matters. At this stage though, it's best to keep their entertainment value to yourself. Until that curtain falls, the best you can do is break a leg!

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