

RAISING CONFIDENT TEENAGERS

The Take 3 Approach to Parenting
Calmly in a Stressful World

Rosie Hill



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If a community values its children it must cherish their parents

—John Bowlby¹

Contents

Acknowledgements	xi
About the author	xii
Introduction	xiii
How to use the book	xiv
Notes on terminology	xv
Afterthought	xv
1. Why Take 3?	1
<i>If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got</i>	
The Take 3 approach	1
All parents are doing their best	2
Take 3: What's in the name?	4
A word of warning ...	4
Ground rules	5
Hopes and fears	7
Self-care	8
Practice tasks	13
Key learning points	15

2. What is adolescence?	17
<i>If we do for other people what they can do for themselves, we can lower their self-esteem</i>	
Teenage stereotypes	17
Our own adolescence	18
The ‘tasks’ of adolescence	20
Emotional literacy	43
Practice tasks	43
Key learning points	47
3. Encouraging young people	49
<i>Behaviour that’s noticed increases; what we pay attention to, we get more of</i>	
Encouragement and praise	49
Encouragement: What <i>does</i> work?	52
Rewarding effectively	57
Making connections	60
Visual aids	63
Practice tasks	65
Key learning points	70
4. The power of listening	71
<i>A problem shared is a problem halved, so zip those lips</i>	
What difference can listening make?	72
Improving our basic listening skills	74
Listening challenges for parents	76
Active listening: When people have <i>strong</i> feelings	77
Practice tasks	85
Key learning points	90
5. Misbehaviour and listening	91
<i>We’ve got two eyes and two ears—these are much better tools for parents than one mouth</i>	
Misbehaviour: Why do young people misbehave?	92
Linking misbehaviour and listening	105
Using active listening with young people	107
A visual reminder of active listening	110
Practice tasks	113
Key learning points	119

6. The four styles of parenting	121
<i>Anything we make conscious, we can transform</i>	
The four styles of parenting: An introduction	122
The four styles of parenting: How did your parents or carers tend to behave?	126
Effects on young people of the four styles of parenting	126
Change is difficult (bad news!) but possible (good news!)	128
Body language and modelling behaviour	129
Practice tasks	132
Key learning points	134
7. Taking stock, 'I' statements and boundaries	137
<i>I love you enough to say NO when I know you'll hate me for it</i>	
Taking stock	137
'I' statements: A powerful way to communicate	138
'I' statements: A summary	146
4Fs boundaries: Firm, fair, friendly fences	147
Where to draw the line: First stage	152
Where to draw the line: Second stage	155
Are you prepared for a reaction?	156
The <i>broken record</i> technique	157
Boundaries: A summary and some further thoughts	159
Practice tasks	160
Key learning points	161
8. Negotiating boundaries and consequences	163
<i>When young people are given some say in the outcome, they're more likely to stick to agreements</i>	
Typical ways parents try to change adolescent behaviour	163
Six stages of negotiating boundaries and resolving conflicts	166
Using consequences	171
Why punishments don't work	174
Family agreements	176
Practice tasks	176
Key learning points	184

9. The drama triangle, sibling rivalry, adult relationships and family meetings	185
<i>If we ‘rescue’ our young people, they never learn to stand on their own two feet</i>	
The drama triangle	185
Sibling rivalry	189
Adult relationships	199
Family meetings	203
Practice tasks	205
Key learning points	208
10. Teens and screens—media challenges and digital optimism	209
<i>Don’t despair! Use your Take 3 skills to support yourself and your adolescent</i>	
Introduction	210
Digital skills and resilience	214
More benefits of the internet	216
Reflecting on our own and our children’s experiences of media use	219
Screens and sleep issues	224
Risks	226
Setting limits	231
Practice tasks	237
Key learning points	239
Notes	241

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Finally, infinite thanks are due to my children for still loving me despite all the mistakes I made, and without whom I never would have got involved with this work, and my own parents who lovingly did their best.

About the author

I'm passionate about the importance of kind and effectual parenting and have worked with parents for more than thirty years. I found raising two children on my own extremely challenging and lonely, but my life began to change after attending a parenting course when they were at primary school. The course introduced me to a host of new ideas and helpful strategies and ever since then I've been committed to getting those valuable practices out into the community.

Apart from being a mother—and now a grandmother—of teenagers, and spending many years as a parenting practitioner (running parenting groups, working with individual parents and training and supervising facilitators), I've been a reflexologist, a training officer for the Citizens Advice Bureau, a china restorer, lived on a small-holding and have a degree in anthropology. Previous publications are the parenting programme *Take 3: Skills and Strategies for Supporting Parents to Deal with Challenging Teenagers* and the book *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*, which I co-edited.²

I work online or in person, offering one-to-one support for parents in the UK and overseas. If this book isn't enough for you and you'd like more individual support, I'd be happy to discuss it with you. Please contact info@take3parenting.co.uk. If you're a professional working with parents or young people who'd like to know about the Take 3 parenting programme, visit <https://www.take3parenting.co.uk>, and if you'd like to train to become a Take 3 group facilitator, visit <http://tugtraining.co.uk/>.

Introduction

This book is about relationship. It's about building rapport and understanding between parents and teenagers at a stage when it's easy for relationships to crumble or sour. It's also about behaviour: tricky adolescent behaviour but also our own (perhaps sometimes tricky) adult behaviour. It's packed with skills and strategies proven to help parents communicate effectively with their young people and support them to mature and develop confidence as they move out into the wider world. I trust that all parents of adolescents (from about 10 years upward) can learn something from this book, but it's a particularly valuable resource for those whose young people are exhibiting behaviour that's challenging, mystifying, infuriating or even frightening, or whose mental state is causing concern. It's also a useful handbook for professionals who care for young people or work with families.

In 2000, while employed as a parenting worker for the Youth Offending Service, I set up the Oxfordshire Parent-Talk programme for parents of out-of-control, at-risk or vulnerable teenagers, and I wrote the Take 3 parenting course to meet the needs of that project. The evidence-based course, *Take 3: Skills and Strategies for Supporting Parents to Deal with Challenging Teenagers*, is now used around the UK and overseas and has become very popular with both parents and facilitators. For many years, I've been asked to write a book for parents based on the principles of the Take 3 course and, finally, here it is. Although it can be read from cover to cover like any other book, it's also a *parenting course*. It's designed so that you, as a parent, can work through it on your own, with a co-parent or even with a couple of friends. If you've already attended a Take 3 course, you'll find the book invaluable for revising what you've learnt, especially if you're going through a difficult patch with your teenager and need to top up your skills.

The book contains a wealth of information about adolescence, parenting styles, reasons for misbehaviour, trauma, sibling rivalry and much else, and offers tried-and-tested strategies for parents to try out. Coming from a deeply supportive and encouraging place, and acknowledging that all parents are always doing their best, the Take 3 approach invites you to reflect on your own behaviour, your strengths and weaknesses, and what you're *modelling* to your children. In one sense this is more of a *how-to-be* book than a *what-to-do-when* book, since it's not really about specific behaviours and appropriate rules. If you're looking for a quick-reference handbook to tell you about the 'right' boundaries to set for a teenager, this isn't the book for you. For example, it doesn't tell you what time your 14-year-old daughter should come in by, or at what age it's advisable to allow your teenager to drink alcohol or go online without adult supervision. Young people mature at varying rates and families evolve from different cultures. What's right for one family might be inappropriate in another family, and parents vary hugely in their expectations of their teenagers. I don't presume to know what boundaries are appropriate for *your* young person, but I'll suggest ways to set effective boundaries once you know what you're aiming for. If you're feeling confused about where to draw limits, talking to other parents is a useful way to help you decide on details with regard to 'ages and stages', or you could try joining a parenting course.

When I was involved with training Take 3 facilitators to work with parents, we used a couple of acronyms to help participants remember some necessary qualities required for their work: REG and the 4Ts. These stood for *Respect, Empathy and Genuineness*, along with *Tact, Timing, Trust* and *Tentativeness*. I suggest that these are also highly recommended (and even necessary) qualities for managing adolescents, and they chime well with the ethos of this book. Take 3 was developed in the UK where I am based, so the examples given and the majority of the research used in this book come from this country. However, I'm confident that this book can benefit parents and families all over the world. With my background in anthropology, I've always approached parents from other cultures with REG and the 4Ts in mind, never prescribing behaviour and always respecting their understanding of their parental roles, trying to find a good fit cross-culturally between the ideas presented here and their own models of parenting. Thus, UK-based or not, I'm sure you'll find support from this book.

How to use the book

To get the most from this book, I recommend that you start at Chapter 1 and then work slowly through the following chapters, leaving several days or even a week between each one as if you were on a course. There's a logic that runs through the book, and each chapter builds on the one before, so it's inadvisable to jump into it halfway through. The chapters correspond to weekly course sessions, and you'll need time to practise new skills each week. These 'practice tasks' are written down for you at the end of every chapter. It works best to digest a little bit at a time and to experiment with doing something differently, to try out a

new strategy and notice whether it changes anything before you rush on to the next chapter and further ideas. We can read all the parenting books in the world, but if we don't act on what we've learnt and reflect on the outcomes of our actions, we'll never know whether or not the ideas are effective in our own particular family situations. This will require time and a certain commitment and could prove challenging when you're already very busy. However, if you're able to commit to this project and try out the Take 3 approach, I trust that you'll end up a wiser, kinder, stronger and more effective parent, able to give your children the love they deserve. In her book *Hamnet*, Maggie O'Farrell describes a young girl as growing up 'with the memory of what it meant to be properly loved, for what you are, not what you ought to be'.³ That sounds to me like the best kind of love.

Some of the practice tasks involve discussions with others so, again, if you're going to work through the book as an active participant in the exercises, the experience could be enhanced by sharing it with someone else.

Notes on terminology

- The word 'parent' is used in this book to represent anyone with parental responsibilities for a child—they may not be a biological parent.
- Although the terms 'young people', 'children', 'teenagers' and 'adolescents' all have different meanings, I've used them here in a fairly non-specific and generalised way because of the wide age range involved—there is no one term denoting the 10 to 18 age range. The only exception to this is where I look at 'adolescence' as a specific developmental stage.

Afterthought

I recently read an autobiography that inspired me. As a young man, Björn Natthiko Lindeblad was well on his way to becoming a highflyer in the world of finance, but one day he decided he was no longer interested in that life, and he threw it all in to become a forest monk in a Thai Buddhist monastery. He remained a monk for seventeen years, until one day he decided to return to the outside world. On leaving his monastic life, he was asked by an interviewer what those years had taught him. He thought long and hard, and then replied, 'I no longer believe my every thought. That's my superpower.' He later named his book *I May be Wrong*.⁴ I mention this because I love his message. We get into so much trouble when we believe in and identify with all our thoughts, and yet they may not be true. With regard to everything written in this book on parenting, please note: 'I may be wrong.' You need to try things out for yourself.