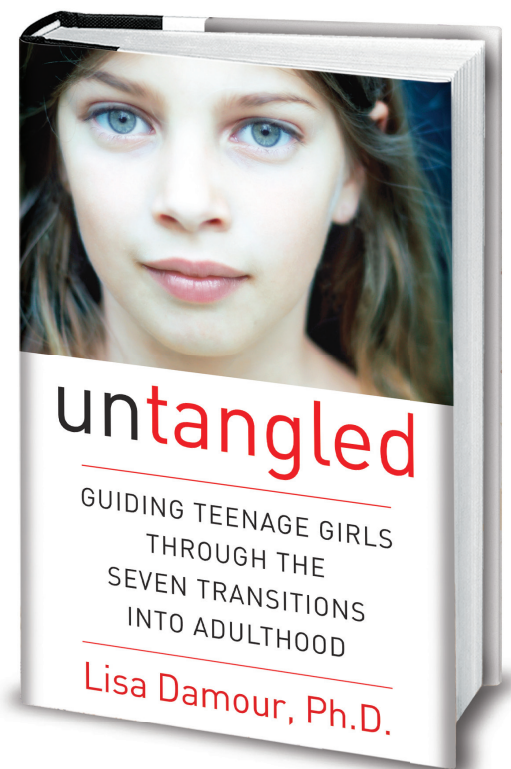


untangled

Lisa Damour, Ph.D.

Discussion Guide



INTRODUCTION

- **CHANGING HOW WE TALK ABOUT TEENAGE GIRLS.** What comments have people made to you about having a teenage daughter? How have those comments colored your thoughts or expectations about raising your girl?
- **THINKING IN TERMS OF DEVELOPMENTAL STRANDS.** As you read about the seven developmental transitions introduced in *Untangled*, can you identify the domains in which your daughter is thriving and the areas where she struggles or gets stuck? Which strands do you feel she has already mastered? Which strands still seem far off in the distance?

CHAPTER ONE: Parting with Childhood

- **GROWING APART.** How have you responded to your daughter's growing distance from you or other members of your family? Has her withdrawal from family life felt personal or raised questions about the motives behind her wish for increased privacy?
- **STAYING CONNECTED.** Are there established patterns in your family that help keep you connected to your daughter? Have you found new ways to spend time together that don't feel uncomfortably childlike for your girl? Do you pick up the conversational topics your daughter offers or do you approach her with pre-planned questions when you want to talk?
- **LESS SUGAR, MORE SPICE.** Has your daughter been rude or surly with you? Has she insulted or rebuked you? How have you reacted when your daughter hurts you? How do you respond when she's unpleasant with other members of the family?
- **13 GOING ON 30.** What has your daughter's journey through puberty been like for her? How about for you or your partner? How have you handled disagreements about what your daughter should wear and how she should present herself?
- **FOUNDATIONS FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of parting with childhood? Does your daughter cling to being a little girl or, at the other extreme, does she seem to be racing ahead toward adult behavior?

CHAPTER TWO: Joining a New Tribe

- **PUTTING FRIENDS FIRST.** Has your daughter found one good friend, or a group of friends, with whom she feels close? How does your daughter manage the conflicts in her social circle? How can you help your daughter to be assertive – to stand up for herself while respecting the rights of others?
- **THE MORE, THE SCARIER.** Do you suspect (or know) that your daughter becomes less safe when she's around her friends? Have you talked with her about this possibility? What steps can you take to make sure she doesn't have to choose between being safe and being cool in the eyes of her friends?
- **FRIENDS IN NEED.** Does your daughter have a friend who looks to her for more support or guidance than is appropriate? Have you had to help your daughter manage the strain of having a needy friend? Have you felt that you needed to alert another adult to information about one of your daughter's friends? If so, how did you go about it?
- **SOCIAL MEDIA.** What do you know about how your daughter conducts herself in digital environments? How closely do you monitor her digital activity? What trustworthy young people (such as a wise cousin, beloved babysitter) might help guide or supervise your daughter online?
- **GROUND'S FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of joining a new tribe? Does she have friends? Has she been involved in bullying as a victim, bully, or both?

CHAPTER THREE: Harnessing Emotions

- **EMOTIONAL HOT POTATOES.** How do you respond when your daughter complains to you about her day? Can you identify a time when your daughter externalized one of her feelings on to you? How did you handle that experience? Who provides you with the emotional support you deserve as you help your daughter manage her intense feelings?
- **GROUP THERAPY.** Does your daughter get useful emotional support from her friends? Does she sometimes become overly upset on behalf of her friends? How do you support your girl when she takes on vicarious stress from others?
- **BUILDING COPING SKILLS.** What are your daughter's favorite ways to help herself feel better? How do you support her positive coping skills? To what degree does your daughter rely on social media to help herself manage hard feelings? Do you find yourself rushing in to help your daughter with difficulties she could manage on her own? If so, why?
- **FOUNDATIONS FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of harnessing her emotions? Does she seem stuck in an unhealthy emotional rut? Does she use self-destructive measures to cope with her feelings?

CHAPTER FOUR: Contending with Adult Authority

- **QUESTIONING AUTHORITY.** When did you become aware that your daughter was no longer buying everything adults were selling? How have you handled it when she challenges your beliefs and expectations? How do you respond when she rolls her eyes while doing what you've asked her to do?
- **LOOKING FOR FRICTION.** What minor rules does your daughter tend to break? What does your daughter do that rubs you the wrong way? How have you reacted to her efforts to find friction with you? Do you use your conflicts with your daughter to build her emotional intelligence?
- **ALL TOO HUMAN.** How do you respond when your daughter points out your shortcomings or those of other adults? What are your crazy spots? How do they affect your parenting? How has being a parent helped you to grow and change?
- **IT'S ABOUT SAFETY.** When you talk with your daughter about rules, do you focus on the consequences of getting caught, or the risks she might face regardless of whether an adult finds out? Has your daughter broken a serious rule designed to keep her safe? If so, how did you respond?
- **GROUNDS FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of contending with adult authority? Is she overly compliant with all adults, including you? Does she have difficulty getting along with any adults? Does she find herself stuck between adults who disagree or undermine each other when it comes to rules?

CHAPTER FIVE: Planning for the future

- **THE PUBLIC AND PERMANENT DIGITAL WORLD.** Does your daughter have a track record of acting impulsively online? If so, how have you responded? What speed-bumps do you have in place to help keep your daughter from exercising a gross lapse of judgment in a digital environment?
- **SCHOOLGIRLS.** How does your daughter approach her schoolwork? Does she take responsibility for her academic life, or does she need you to step in? How have you responded when your daughter has difficulty at school?
- **MEETING CHALLENGES.** How does your daughter handle academic pressure around tests and big assignments? How does your daughter react when she faces disappointment? How do you respond when things don't go your girl's way?
- **GROUND FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of planning for the future? Does her pursuit of her goals interfere with her ability to relax and enjoy herself? Does she have meaningful plans for the future or does she seem to be just bobbing along?

CHAPTER SIX: Entering the Romantic World

- **HELLO, ROMANCE.** Does your daughter talk about the crushes in her class or share information about her love life with you? How have you responded when the topic of romance comes up?
- **WEIGHING IN.** How do you encourage your daughter to focus on getting what she wants out of romance? How do you help your daughter to articulate for herself and her partners what she does and doesn't want to have happen when it comes to her love life? What steps can you take to shield your girl from the sexism or misogyny she will confront?
- **SLUT SHAMING.** How does your daughter talk about girls who are sexually active? How do you feel about teenage girls becoming sexually active? Can you transmit your values while helping your daughter question sexual double standards?
- **LGBTQ.** How does your daughter talk about teens who are LGBTQ? Do you think, or know, that your daughter is LGBTQ? If so, how have you responded to your daughter's sexual orientation or gender identity, both when you are at home and when you are out in the world?
- **GROUNDS FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of entering the romantic world? Does your daughter rely on her allure to feel good about herself? Does she take a romantic interest in boys who are more than a year older than she is?

CHAPTER SEVEN: Caring for Herself

- **THE VEIL OF OBEDIENCE.** Can you recognize when your daughter is only pretending to listen to you? Can you identify what gets her to don her veil of obedience and what you can do get her to come out from behind it?
- **EATING AND SLEEPING.** Does your daughter have a healthy relationship with food? Do you talk with your daughter about her eating in a way that puts her self-care first? Does your daughter's digital technology interfere with her sleep? Can you count on your daughter to take steps to get enough sleep?
- **DRINKING AND DRUGS.** Do you have open lines of communication with your daughter about the place of alcohol and drugs in her social circle? Can you speak frankly with her about the risks that come with drinking and drugs? Do you talk with your girl about how she will keep herself safe when faced with peer pressure to engage in dangerous behavior?
- **LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX.** Have you talked with your daughter about the values you hold regarding sexual activity? Are you comfortable discussing the elements of a safe and healthy sex life? Do you feel that your daughter can come to you as a trusted resource regarding sex?
- **GROUNDS FOR CONCERN.** Do you have reason to worry about how your daughter is managing the work of caring for herself? Does your daughter diet excessively or take measures to get rid of calories she has already consumed? When it comes time for your daughter to leave home, do you think she will be ready to care for herself?

CONCLUSION

- **IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.** Are there times when you have taken your daughter's teenage behavior personally? Have there been moments when she hurt you on purpose? If so, why do you think she did that? Have there been times when you have been hurt even though that was not her intention?
- **NOW, ABOUT YOU.** How has raising a teenage girl helped you to grow or change? What hopes and worries do you have for your daughter as she becomes an adult? What are the best parts, for you, about being the parent of a teenage girl?