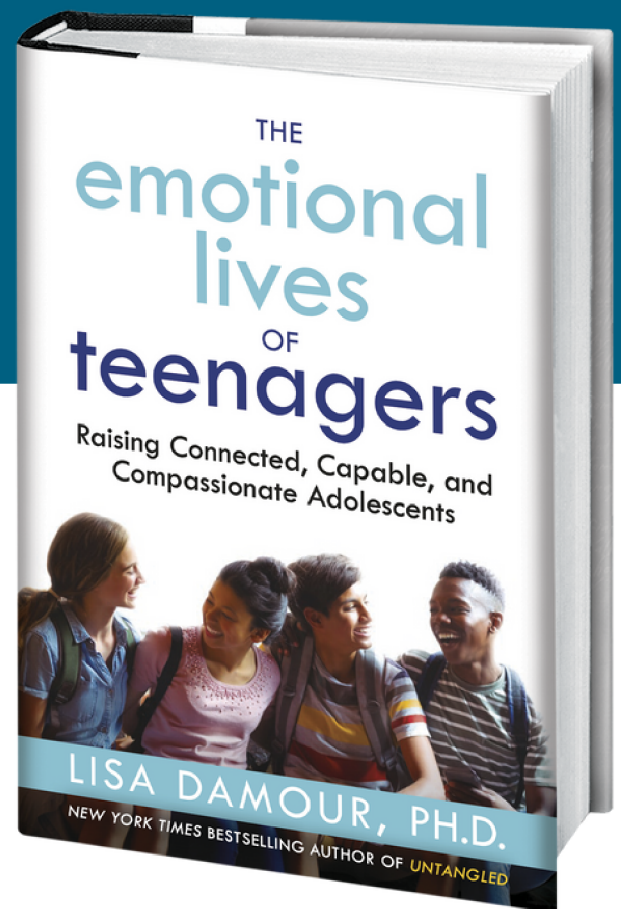


the emotional lives of teenagers

discussion
guide for
parents

Lisa Damour, PhD



Untangling family life.



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INTRODUCTION

- What is it like for you when your teen expresses negative emotions? How would you describe your internal reaction? How do you tend to respond to your teen at these times?
- What is your initial response to the book's definition of emotional health, in that it involves:
 - having feelings that fit their context, and
 - being able to manage those feelings effectively?



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CHAPTER ONE

ADOLESCENT EMOTION 101: GETTING PAST THREE BIG MYTHS

- What role do emotions play on your teen's personal board of directors?
- How might the information in this chapter on hot and cold reasoning change how you talk with your teen about risky situations?
- Have there been times when you went out of your way to try to prevent the possibility that your teen would experience emotional distress? Why or why not?
- Using the criteria presented at the end of Chapter One, how would you evaluate your teen's overall mental health?



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CHAPTER TWO GENDER AND EMOTION

- What's your sense of how gender socialization has influenced your teen's expression of emotion?
- How does your teen express anger? Can they comfortably share feelings of vulnerability? If you are raising a teen who belongs to a marginalized group, how do you think that experience has shaped your teen's emotional life?
- If you are raising a Black teenager, how have you addressed the emotional impact of adultification on your adolescent? If you are not Black, what steps have you taken, or could you take, to address the impact of systemic racism on Black adolescents?
- How has becoming a teenager impacted your teen's self-esteem? What part have traditional, and perhaps nontraditional, gender categories played in your teen's emerging identity and sense of self-worth?



CHAPTER THREE

SEISMIC SHIFT: HOW ADOLESCENCE PUTS A NEW SPIN ON EVERYDAY LIFE

- What are the main points of friction between you and your teen? How has having a teen helped you grow?
- How do you feel about your teen's relationship with social media and digital technology? In what ways does technology make your teen's life better – and worse?
- How would you describe the health of your teen's friendships?
- Did reading this chapter give you a new perspective on how school feels for your teen? If so, how?



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CHAPTER FOUR

MANAGING EMOTIONS, PART ONE: HELPING TEENS EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS

- How have you typically responded when your teen describes being in emotional distress? Having read Chapter Four, might you respond differently going forward? If so, how?
- If your teen isn't a big "talker," under what conditions is your teen most likely to open up?
- Does your teen express emotions non-verbally? If so, what wordless strategies does your teen prefer?
- Do you worry that your teen relies on unhealthy strategies for emotional expression? If so, how have you addressed those concerns?



CHAPTER FIVE

MANAGING EMOTIONS, PART TWO: HELPING TEENS REGAIN EMOTIONAL CONTROL

- What distractions and comforts does your teen turn to when upset? Do your teen's preferred strategies provide effective emotional relief?
- How much and how well does your teen sleep? Have you noticed a link between your teen's sleep habits and their ability to regulate intense emotions?
- Raising teenagers stirs up intense feelings in parents. How well do you feel you've been able to manage your own emotions throughout your child's adolescence?
- Do you have concerns that your teen relies on unhealthy strategies for regaining emotional control? If so, how have you addressed those concerns?



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CONCLUSION

- Has reading [The Emotional Lives of Teenagers](#) changed how you regard and respond to your teen's emotions? If so, how?
- What questions do you still have about your teen's emotional life, or about adolescent psychological development in general?

