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Harnessing Emotions

WHEN I WAS IN MY FIRST SEMESTER OF GRADUATE SCHOOL, THE professor teaching my psychological testing course handed me a stack of Rorschach inkblot tests to score. Before sending me on my way, he offhandedly said, "Double-check the age of the person whose test you are scoring. If it's a teenager, but you think it's a grown-up, you'll conclude that you have a psychotic adult. But that's just a normal teenager."

Two years later, I came across this account of adolescence, written by Anna Freud:

I take it that it is normal for an adolescent to behave for a considerable length of time in an inconsistent and unpredictable manner; to fight her impulses and accept them; to love her parents and to hate them; to revolt against them and be dependent on them; to be deeply ashamed to acknowledge her mother before others and, unexpectedly, to desire heart-to-heart talks with her; to thrive on imitation of others while searching unceasingly for her own identity; to be more idealistic, artistic, generous, and unselfish than she will ever be again, but also the opposite: self-centered, egoistic, calculating. *Such fluctuations and extreme opposites would be deemed highly abnormal at any other time of life.* At this

time they may signify no more than that an adult structure of personality takes a long time to emerge, that the individual in question does not cease to experiment and is in no hurry to close down on possibilities.

I thought, “Wow. There it is again: in teenagers, normal seems crazy.”

Twenty years later, I don’t need to score inkblot tests or read Anna Freud to know that healthy teenage development can look pretty irrational. Parents tell me about it every day. They describe how a minor annoyance—such as when a girl finds out that the jeans she wants are still riding out the rinse cycle—can turn into an emotional earthquake that knocks everyone in the house off balance. They describe how their formerly mild-mannered daughter now actually screams when excited, and how their girl who was resilient at age eleven has meltdowns over small disappointments at age fourteen. And it’s not just that teenagers’ feelings are potent, they’re also erratic. I hear about how the “worst day in the history of the universe” can suddenly become the “best day, ever!” if a crush-worthy peer sends a flirty text. As one of my friends put it, “My daughter has five different, extreme emotions before eight in the morning.”

The sudden force of a teenager’s feelings can catch parents off guard because, between the ages of six and eleven, children go through a phase of development that psychologists call *latency*. As the term implies, the mercurial moods of early childhood simmer down and girls are pretty easygoing until they become teenagers and their emotions kick up again. Recent developments in brain science offer new insight into why latency ends when it does. Though we used to assume that the brain stopped developing somewhere around age twelve, we now know that the brain remodels dramatically during the

even be trumped by, other factors that influence your daughter's mood, such as stressful events or the quality of her relationship with you. In other words, the changes in your daughter's brain and the events that occur around her are more likely to shape her mood than the hormonal shifts occurring inside of her.

Here's the bottom line: what your daughter broadcasts matches what she actually experiences. Really, it's just that intense, so take her feelings seriously, regardless of how overblown they might seem. The upsurge in your daughter's feelings brings us to the developmental strand we'll consider in this chapter—the one where she learns how to harness all of those emotions. Girls may start adolescence in a whirl of passions, but we want them to arrive at adulthood with the confidence that they can manage, indeed make good use of, their feelings.

Parents who are surprised by their daughter's dramatic ups and downs can lose sight of the fact that she is pretty shocked, too. Early in my career, a senior colleague offered some of the best professional advice I've ever received. She said, "You must work with the assumption that every teenager secretly worries that she's crazy." Since my Rorschach-scoring days I'd been thinking about the fact that healthy teens can *seem* crazy to adults, but it hadn't yet occurred to me that teens, themselves, are worrying about their own sanity. But of course they are. A girl can dissolve over unavailable jeans while simultaneously thinking, "What's happening to me?" Teenagers remember the calm waters of latency and are often as unsettled as their parents are by the stormy seas of adolescence.

I always bear my colleague's advice in mind when, in my professional capacity, I meet a girl for the first time. However eager she may be to talk to me, however understandable her challenges are, I assume that some part of her is thinking, "It's

teenage years. The renovation project follows the pattern in which the brain grew in the womb. It starts with the lower, primal portions (the limbic system) then moves to the upper, outer areas (the cortex), where the functions that separate humans from other animals live.

Updates to the limbic system heighten the brain's emotional reactions with research indicating that the feeling centers beneath the cortex are actually more sensitive in teens than in children or adults. For example, one straightforward study used functional magnetic resonance imaging to watch teenage brains respond, in real time, to emotional input. The research team showed images of fearful, happy, and calm faces to children, teens, and adults while monitoring the activity of the amygdala, a key player in the emotional reactions of the limbic system. Compared to the brain activity of children and adults, the teens' amygdalas reacted strongly to fearful or happy faces. In other words, emotional input rings like a gong for teenagers and a chime for everyone else.

With the lower-to-higher remodeling of the brain, the frontal cortex—the part of the brain that exerts a calming, rational influence—doesn't come fully online until adulthood. This means that limbic system reactions outstrip frontal cortex controls. Put simply, intense emotions burst through and introduce you, and your daughter, to a new period of emotional upheaval.

Adults often tell teens that their feelings are at full blast because of "hormones." This usually doesn't go over very well, plus it's probably inaccurate. Despite the obvious coincidence between the beginnings of puberty—with its acne, growth spurts, and dawning smelliness—and the intensification of your daughter's emotions, research evidence suggests that the impact of pubertal hormones on teenagers' moods is indirect, at best. In fact, studies find that hormones respond to, or may

plaining. Overnight, the fifth-grade girl who shared amusing accounts of the games she and her friends invented over lunch turns into the sixth grader whose stories run together in a din of grumbling. No parents enjoy listening to their daughter's endless stream of complaints, but it's a lot easier to stand if we appreciate that her griping serves a valuable purpose.

Complaining to you allows your daughter to bring the best of herself to school. Adults generally hold sugarcoated memories of what it's like to spend a school day with one's peers. We think teens are lucky to get to hang out all day with their friends, but the reality of school is usually a far cry from what we think we remember. If you were to follow your daughter invisibly through her school day, I can all but guarantee the three reactions you would have. First, you would think, "Geez, her day is as demanding as it is tedious; that clock in her history class actually seems to go backward." Second, "A lot of these kids are really *annoying*. I'm never going to make it to lunch period." And finally, "Wow. She handles her day with incredible grace—I don't know how she does it. Especially when she's being told what to do all day and can't even go to the bathroom without permission."

Of course, children must adapt to peers, teachers, and the demands of school starting in preschool, but they tend not to vigorously *complain* about their days until they are teenagers. Why is this? With every feeling turned up to the maximum, the classmate who was merely bothersome in fourth grade becomes downright unbearable in seventh. And teenagers have much less patience with adults (because they are far better at seeing through them) than children do. Further, younger children often go ahead and *act* on their annoyance by letting their impulses take over; they hit, push, call names, or find other ways to misbehave at school. Teenagers (and plenty of adults) still have the same impulses but use their willpower to

presumably, had used up all of their willpower resisting the cookies. For many teens, school is a plate of radishes. By the time they get to the end of the day, there's just no energy left to contain their annoyance, and the complaining begins.

Girls who get a chance to talk about the abundant frustrations of their day usually feel better once they've unloaded their distress on you. Any adult who has spent dinnertime grumbling about a coworker, neighbor, or boss understands that sharing one's true feelings at home makes it a lot easier to be charming out in public. Teenagers are no different. Having used you as their emotional dumping ground, they are prepared to return to school and play the part of the good citizen. Indeed, they may be able to act as a good citizen at school *precisely because* they are spending some of their time imagining the colorful complaints they will share once their school day has ended.

When your daughter complains, listen quietly and remind yourself that you are providing her with a way to unload the stress of her day. Many parents find that they want to *do* something as they listen to their daughter's distress—to offer advice, point out their daughter's misconceptions, make a plan to address her troubles, and so on. Do not feel pressed to solve your daughter's problems; you've probably tried and already found that she routinely rejects your suggestions, even the especially brilliant ones. If you really want to help your daughter manage her distress, help her see the difference between complaining and venting. Complaining generally communicates sense that "someone should fix this," while venting communicates that "I'll feel better when someone who cares about me hears me out." Most of what teens complain about can't be fixed. No magic wand can make her peers, teachers, coaches, locker location, or homework any less irritating. Better for her to do a little less complaining about such realities and a little

to the level of complaining (much less venting). These are the days when she simply takes out her annoyance on anyone in her path—a particularly unpleasant, and common, form of using you (your other children, or the family dog) as an emotional dumping ground. If your daughter feels that she must punish your family for her bad day, you might let one or two cutting comments pass. But, if it becomes clear that she plans to be wretched all evening, go ahead and say, “You may not be in a good mood, but you are not allowed to mistreat us. If you want to talk about what’s bugging you, I’m all ears. If you’re going to be salty all night, don’t do it here.”

I’m Upset, Now You’re Upset

When I get to my Harry Potter office on the days I spend at Laurel School, the first thing I do is check the messages on my desk phone. One morning, I found three messages in a row from the same dad.

The first, anxious message:

Hi Dr. Damour, this is Mark B., calling at seven fifteen on Tuesday night. When I came home from work I found Samantha’s chemistry test on the kitchen table—she got a D on it. I’m not sure how well you know Sammy, but she’s never gotten a grade lower than a B. I tried to talk with her about the test but she said that it’s no big deal and that I’m overreacting. I can’t tell what’s worrying me more: her bad grade or the fact that she doesn’t seem to care about it. This is totally unlike her because she’s usually really serious about school. I’m confused and wondering if you can call me tomorrow.

agers sometimes manage their feelings by getting their parents to have their feelings instead. In other words, they toss you an emotional hot potato.

Your adolescent daughter doesn't wake up one day and say to herself, "I think I'll start handing off my uncomfortable feelings to my parents." The decision to use externalization for emotional relief occurs outside her conscious awareness. Unconscious processes can be powerful. If we could hold up a microphone to your daughter's unconscious mind, it would say, "You know, I've had a long day of being upset about this grade—the whole thing has become exhausting. I don't have a solution to the problem, but I need a break from being upset. I'll leave the test where Dad will surely find it so that *he* can be upset about it. Now, he might try to get me to remain upset about this grade, so I'll tell him he's overreacting and walk away—that should keep the upset feeling in his lap and out of mine for a while."

Here's another example. One night early in my first year of college on the East Coast, I was feeling particularly unsure, lonely, and far from my Colorado home. I called my mother to share my misery and my certainty that things would never get better. She tried to offer comfort and advice, but I abruptly ended the phone call on a despairing note, letting her know that I would find a way to muddle through, sadly and alone. When I hung up, I felt much better. My roommate showed up and we went out for the evening and had a great time.

The next morning, my mother called to check in. "Are you okay?" she asked in a voice warped by fatigue and concern. "Of course I am, what's wrong with you?" I asked back, but not in the kind, sensitive way you might be generously imagining. Later, I learned from my dad that she had stayed awake most of the night worrying about me.

Externalization happens when your daughter wants to get

doing it. Teens don't consciously decide to externalize, so they can't consciously decide not to. The process unfolds as rapidly for her as it does for you. Even if you could talk your daughter into taking responsibility for all of her difficult feelings all of the time, would you want to? Your willingness to hold your daughter's emotional hot potatoes from time to time is a thankless and charitable act, but it will help her get through some of the roughest patches of her adolescence. Given the opportunity to unload their discomfort, most teens will gather their resources and work through what went wrong or discover, with the benefit of time, that the problem comes down to size on its own. While Samantha's father worried in the kitchen about her indifference toward a D, she emailed her teacher about finding a time to review her test. Having made my mother upset on my behalf, I was able to go out and have fun with my roommate. (If I were a teen today, I would have simply sent my mom a distressing text message, then refused to acknowledge her response or answer my phone.)

What becomes of an externalized feeling? Well, now it's yours to manage, and many parents feel compelled to leap into action. Samantha's dad was ready to upend her summer plans. My mom seriously considered throwing some sandwiches in the car and driving across the plains to rescue me from my plight. If you find yourself compelled into radical action after a brief but painful encounter with your daughter, I've got two words for you: do nothing.

At an appointment in early November of Camille's eighth-grade year, Maya told me that she'd really blown it the prior weekend. Halloween had fallen on Friday night, so Maya was surprised that Camille stayed home to give out candy instead of going out with friends. The next morning, Maya casually asked what Camille's friends had done the night before. Camille indifferently responded that "pretty much everyone was

So what's a parent to do? When you are on the receiving end of an externalization, avoid taking urgent action. You love your daughter, and you are suddenly the reluctant owner of some of her intense teenage-sized pain. In this moment, you risk bringing a sledgehammer down on a thumbtack of a problem. Though a teenager will experience her fight with a friend as a full-blown crisis, it's our job as adults to remember that it's not. In fact, we can do a lot to help adolescents bring feelings down to size by not reacting like teenagers ourselves. Our overreactions only seem to confirm that *it really is that bad* and usually make the situation worse.

Camille would have resisted any immediate effort on Maya's part to talk about why she was left out of the party. Camille was in pain about her relationship with Sara but really wanted her mother to be in pain about it instead. Ideally, Maya might have called me or looked to her husband or a discreet friend for support. Talking with a trustworthy adult about what's happening with your teenager is usually the perfect salve to the discomfort of being on the receiving end of an externalization. By sharing the situation with someone who *isn't* holding an emotional hot potato, most parents start to see things more clearly and to regain an adult perspective on the problem.

Had Maya talked it through, she might have guessed that there was more to the story and that it would be best to stay out of it or offer moral support to Camille as she tried to patch things up, again, with Sara. Sometimes another adult isn't available or the content of the externalization feels too sensitive to be shared. Under these conditions—and absent pressing safety concerns—wait at least a day before taking any action. Waiting gives the hot potato time to cool and gives you and your daughter time to craft a rational plan. And you'd be

ship. If your daughter experiences a jolt of anxiety when she realizes that there are no adults at a party and things are getting shifty in the basement, we'd want her to tune in to that feeling and call it a night.


Psychological discomfort is an amazing thing. It not only helps teenagers make good decisions, it sparks maturation. A girl who feels guilty because she didn't follow through on a promise will likely keep her promises in the future. Feeling the sting of a mistake keeps us from making the same mistake again. When you can, help your daughter to look upon a hard feeling as a really useful piece of information. If she pays attention to it and learns from it, she can expect to have fewer hard feelings going forward.

We want our daughters to learn from their emotional discomfort and use it to direct and drive their growth. But try telling that to your daughter (or yourself, for that matter) when she's apoplectic about an upcoming job interview or sobbing because she lost her varsity spot. Emotional pain can be a good thing, but we have to account for the fact that teenagers often have the right feeling on the wrong scale. They sometimes become swamped by their emotions, and no one can learn and grow when she feels as if she's drowning.

If your daughter becomes emotionally overwhelmed, you might feel overwhelmed, too. We love our daughters, hate to see them suffer, and can be tempted to react in proportion to their overreactions. As with emotional hot potatoes, you can help by making sure that your response matches the actual size of the problem. Losing a varsity spot is disappointing, but it's not grounds for you or your daughter to feel that she'll "never be good at anything, ever." If your daughter will allow it, see if you can help put her feelings into words.

By some magic that I can't fully explain (despite the fact that my entire career as a clinician rests on this magic), having

ter feel better. Trust me, you're both better off when you validate her emotions. Once a girl believes that her parents understand where she's coming from, she's usually willing to consider their advice or find her own solution. And don't try to guilt your daughter out of a feeling. If you tell her she shouldn't complain about a weekend trip away from home she might calm down to appease you, but you haven't really helped. She probably still feels upset, but now she can add feeling dismissed and guilty to her pile of misery.



At times, your daughter won't be in the mood to talk about her distress, or she might reject your attempts to harness her feelings by putting them into words. Under these conditions, consider my favorite fallback line: "Is there anything I can do that won't make things worse?" Set to a compassionate tune, there's beauty in this phrasing. In just a few words, it communicates everything your daughter needs to know: you understand that her distress is real, you're not going to try to talk her out of her feelings, nor are you frightened of them, and you can live with your inability to make things better. The last bit does the most work. If your daughter's at the end of her rope, she needs to hear your confidence that she'll find her way to a soft landing. When my friend told me that her daughter flipped out over unexpected tears, I suggested that she could remind her that crying often brings emotional relief. Tears, even unexplainable ones, don't seem so alarming if parents aren't worried by them and, instead, point out the relief that usually results from a good cry.

Catalytic Reactions

When it comes to dealing with emotional distress, research tells us that girls discuss while boys distract. In other words,

boys' book and find a distraction. Normal teenagers become deeply preoccupied with their own world, all the more so when things aren't going well. Teenage girls can forget that taking a break from a problem might be part of the solution.

Shortly after she got off the phone with Sara's mom, Maya sent her an email apologizing for her call and for Camille's "Halloween parties are for babies" posting. Maya then confronted Camille about her mean message and asked what was behind it. Camille tearfully told Maya that she regretted the posting almost immediately but had hoped (unrealistically) that Sara would take it as a joke, even though Camille knew it wasn't funny. With Maya's help, Camille apologized, by text, to Sara late Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, it was clear that Camille had hardly slept because she'd spent most of the night checking her phone for a response. Stone-faced, Camille continued to check her phone for a reply until early Sunday afternoon, when Maya sent her outside to rake leaves. Though hardly chipper about the chore, Camille's mood lightened with the physical activity, fresh air, and break from her phone. Late Sunday, Sara sent a brief reply accepting Camille's apology, and on Monday they sat together at the same lunch table. Camille reported to Maya that lunch was "kinda awkward, but okay."

If your daughter doesn't welcome your suggestions about how to distract herself, try pointing her toward her best coping strategies. Every girl has her preferred ways of managing emotional distress, even if she doesn't always appreciate that that's what she's doing. Some girls feel better if they go for a run, others take long showers. They organize their rooms, shoot hoops in the driveway, do crafts, paint their nails, listen to music that fits or counters their mood, make lists, go on hikes, take naps, cook comfort foods, or try on clothes.

Many girls turn to the things they loved when they were

plex chemistry of her tribe and trigger far-reaching chain reactions. This is not to say that boys don't care about what happens with their friends; it is to say that boys seem to be less likely than girls to take on a peer's problem as their own. They're more likely to express the equivalent of, "Sorry to hear that you're struggling, buddy. Let me know how it shakes out."

Lana, from chapter 2, was discreet about Cassie's cutting and didn't talk about it with the other girls in their tribe, who would have also fretted about their friend. Instead, Lana worried about Cassie privately, lost a lot of sleep in the process, and needed help to get out from under the burden of caring for her friend. When your daughter has a close friend who is suffering, there's a good chance your daughter will suffer too, even if the problem isn't as worrisome as Cassie's. If a girl can't focus on her homework because her best friend's parents are splitting up, try, "You're a great friend—and you're upset because Tia is upset. But not getting your homework done doesn't help Tia feel better. What if you push pause on your worries just for tonight and get to bed at a reasonable hour? In the morning, you can come up with some fun ways to pull her attention away from her parents' troubles. Given that there's nothing either of you can do to change what's happening, that would be a really kind thing to do."

Coping by Posting

As a psychologist who began practicing long before digital media invaded our lives, I've been blown away by the power of technology to stunt girls' ability to recognize and manage their own feelings. Unfortunately, the end of latency (and the upsurge in emotions) occurs around the same time that many

light in her retaliatory skills and to resist lecturing her about how hurtful her behavior was for everyone else. But my job was to get to the bottom of Brooke's stress, so I worked to remember that her hurtful behavior was evidence that she, too, suffered.

Brooke's distress was well hidden; it lived outside of everyone's awareness, even her own. The instant that Brooke felt any emotional pain—shame, humiliation, rejection, fear—she turned the tables. In the short term, her strategy worked. She no longer felt small when she made someone else feel smaller. She no longer felt frightened of rejection when she proved that she could push others away with an even bigger shove. Of course there are many, far better ways to soothe distress and solve problems, but there have always been people who manage pain by inflicting it on someone else. Unfortunately, digital technology gives new power and potential to this unpleasant human impulse.

There's something to be said for detaching from others. When we are alone and disconnected from technology, we can reflect on our feelings, vent silently to ourselves or our diaries, and imagine what we might say or do while considering the impact of any real action. Everyone who grew up without digital technology recalls having written a letter we're glad we never sent or having a rant we're glad no one heard. Using private time to express and get to know a feeling lets the feeling come down to size, teaches us a great deal about ourselves, and acquaints us with our internal resources for managing distress. Social disconnection also allows time to develop a considered plan about how (or if!) we want to act on hard feelings. In other words, we have time to keep our thoughts and our feelings separate from our actions.

Obviously, digital technology takes away social isolation. Brooke never had to sit, alone, with an uncomfortable feeling.

overshare online to pull attention their way. Or girls scan social media when they worry they've done something gossip worthy. Instead of taking stock of their anxiety and what they can learn from it, they eagerly search for evidence that they are being discussed. Girls also turn to digital technology when excited, using it to announce good news or hard-won accomplishments. Even here, the digital world can interfere with a girl's ability to enjoy a good thing. Rather than savoring her happiness or sharing it with nonvirtual friends and family, she may find herself anxiously checking her posts to see if they are being "liked" or commented upon favorably.

As already suggested, hold off on giving your daughter ready access to social media for as long as you can. The longer she goes without knowing the drug-like buzz of connecting to peers digitally, the more internal resources she'll build up for managing hard feelings and solving problems. Next, also as already suggested, set some boundaries around where and when your daughter can access social media. Consider limiting or banning digital activity (for you and your daughter) while out and about together, at meals, and in the hour or so before bedtime—prime times when you might be able to have a meaningful conversation with her about what she's thinking and how she's feeling.

You can also help regulate your daughter's digital technology use by supporting, or, if necessary, requiring, her participation in extracurricular activities. While engaged with sports, plays, volunteering or paid positions, or any of the other amazing things teenage girls do, girls not only build their social skills, they invariably face emotional challenges that they have to manage. With limited access to their phones, they learn to summon their own resources or capitalize on in-person support. Without question, there are dangers to over-

How to Become an Accidental Helicopter Parent

It's not just peer interactions over digital technology that undermine a girl's capacity to deal with hard feelings. Parents sometimes play their part, too. Helicopter parents are widely, and often fairly, critiqued. But the rant against helicopter parents usually addresses the outcome—the parent who seems to manage even the smallest details of a teenager's life—and misses the steps that lead to that result. My experience with parents and teenagers suggests that many helicopter parents earn their title as a result of a complex interaction between parent *and child* that unfolds over many years.

In my private practice, I usually meet with new teenage clients a couple of times before I meet with their parents because, ultimately, it's my job to serve the teenager; it makes sense for her to be the first to assess whether I'm likely to be a good fit. Over the years, I have developed a practice of asking girls to tell me what they think their parents will share when we meet. Girls almost always know exactly what their parents will say and, though I don't ask for this, the order in which they will say it. When I asked Brooke what her mother would tell me when we met, she surmised that her mom would link Brooke's headaches to Brooke's near-constant social drama, and then describe how neglected she, herself, felt as a child and how hard she has worked to be available to her own children, despite having a demanding job.

In our meeting, Sandra, a petite, edgy woman, made good on Brooke's guesses but also added that she worried about Brooke's intense dependence upon her. Sandra explained that in the sixth grade, when Brooke first got a phone, she started texting Sandra from school anytime she hit a snag. In Sandra's words, "Brooke would text in a total meltdown over a missing math book or because she hated what they had for lunch and

a key element here was that Sandra wished to be a better, more available parent to Brooke than her own parents had been to her. I've also seen adults drawn into helicopter parenting because they are worried about losing their connection to their teen and welcome the invitation to stay close. I've seen others who fret that they spend too much time at work and so welcome the opportunity to be present digitally. Put simply, the instant connection provided by digital technology can put parents and teenagers on a loving road to an unfortunate outcome.

No parents look at their infant daughter and think, "How can we raise our girl in a way that will be sure to turn her into an emotionally impaired, overly dependent young woman?" We all aim to raise self-sufficient, problem-solving girls, so we need to appreciate that digital technology poses a real threat to this goal. You can avoid becoming an accidental helicopter parent by paying close attention to how your daughter uses technology to engage with you. If she's checking in to let you know she's running late, terrific. If she's texting you because she's upset about a grade that just got handed back, be careful about how—and how quickly—you respond. Waiting to reply will give her time to come up with a solution that doesn't involve you. You can't fix the grade, and if you don't respond right away (or at all), she'll get help from a friend or teacher, or find a way to manage her upset feelings on her own. If you worry that going dark will be experienced as cruelly withholding, send a warm text message that cheers on her ability to come to a resolution. Let her know that you're there to support her, not there to solve problems for her. Something like, "Bummer—but definitely a challenge you can handle. Xoxo, Mom."

depression is like living with a touchy porcupine. When teens are testy all the time, it's easy for adults to write their behavior off as stereotypically teenaged and simply annoying. That's a mistake, and one that causes us to miss many highly treatable cases of adolescent depression. If you tense up every time you try to interact with your daughter because you expect her to be prickly, you should consider the possibility that something's really wrong.

Bipolar disorders—mood disorders that involve both manic highs and depressive lows—often begin during adolescence. Teenagers who suffer from manic episodes may have periods in which they sleep little, talk fast, and dash from one activity to the next, often with little regard for their own safety. Though mania is often associated in the popular culture with joyful giddiness and high levels of productivity, adults and teenagers in a manic phase are likely to become agitated or irritated and to accomplish little even while being endlessly active. Recent years have seen a sharp, controversial increase in the diagnoses of these disorders in teenagers. On one side of the debate you'll find clinicians who worry that we're now carelessly stretching an old diagnostic category to include what are really just common, if extreme, adolescent mood swings. On the other side, you'll find clinicians who feel that bipolar disorders have long been underdiagnosed in teens because their manic symptoms sometimes look like mere troublesome outbursts, not the hyperactivity we typically see in manic adults.

And then there's anxiety, a feeling that can be a useful signal that something's amiss, but only when it occurs in certain contexts and with sufficient intensity. As we know, anxiety can be a girl's best friend if it helps her to be on her toes when she's in a dangerous situation. Unfortunately, anxiety can also grow out of control and ring a deafening emotional alarm

help. If she can't part with childhood because she's anxiously clinging to you, be concerned. If she can't join a new tribe because she's so depressed that she won't reach out to classmates, it's time to worry. The same rule applies to the strands yet to come. It's normal for girls to be temperamental, but they shouldn't be so out of sorts that they offend every adult (chapter 4), can't plan for the future (chapter 5), won't pursue romantic relationships (chapter 6), or don't care for themselves (chapter 7).

Self-Destructive Coping

Some teens rely on self-destructive tactics to harness painful feelings. Drinking, using drugs, engaging in eating-disordered behavior, and cutting are disastrous long-term solutions for psychological distress, but in the short term, they do an incredibly effective job of numbing emotional pain. Teens, like some adults, can come to depend on the nearly instantaneous psychological relief that comes with getting high or harming themselves in another way, especially if they see no other path toward feeling better. Even leaning heavily on peers, as Cassie did with Lana, might bring short-term solace but long-term trouble as peers eventually back away to save themselves.

If you suspect that your daughter relies on self-destructive practices to manage unwanted feelings, there are two reasons you'll want to seek professional help immediately. Most obviously, the behaviors themselves are dangerous and need to stop. Less obviously, the self-destructive behaviors interfere with the crucial psychological maturation that comes with experiencing and learning from emotional pain. As clinicians who specialize in treating substance abuse say, "A person stops maturing at the age that they start abusing substances," and I have always found this to be true in my own practice. People

true. I'm nuts. Because here I am sitting with a psychologist." I use every tool at my disposal—my words, my tone, my demeanor—to let her know that I see her as capable and whole and that we will be equal partners in the effort to make sense of whatever has brought her my way. To paraphrase the great neurologist Oliver Sacks, I try not to meet girls thinking, "What difficulty does this girl have?" but instead, "What girl has this difficulty?"

So if your teenage daughter is developing normally, you are living with someone who secretly worries that she is crazy and who might have the psychological assessment results of a psychotic adult. And we might as well add that you are living with a girl whose key support system—her tribe—consists of peers who are also as reactive and erratic as they will ever be. Your daughter works hard every day to harness powerful and unpredictable emotions so that she can get on with doing everything else she means to do.

To manage all of that intensity and to keep from feeling crazy, she'll recruit your help. Depending on the moment, she might ask for your support directly, she might unload her feelings on you, or she might find a way for you to have a feeling on her behalf. Sometimes you'll recognize the role you are being asked to play, other times you'll only appreciate your part in retrospect, if at all. Understanding your daughter's efforts to harness emotions will allow you to maintain your sanity while you're busy helping her feel confident in her own.

You: The Emotional Dumping Ground

Teenagers often manage their feelings by dumping the uncomfortable ones on their parents, so don't be surprised if you find that the arrival of adolescence comes with a surge in com-

contain their negative feelings and keep themselves out of trouble during the school day.

Here's where you come in.

Instead of being rude or aggressive toward peers or teachers at school, your daughter contains her irritation and waits until she is safely in your company to express it. If she can hold it together all day at school, you might wonder why your daughter can't hold it together a little bit longer so that she can also be pleasant with you. As it turns out, willpower is a limited resource—a finding demonstrated by one of my favorite semisadistic but harmless and creative research studies. The psychologists conducting the research asked undergraduates to participate in what the students thought was a study of taste perception. The subjects were sent alone into a room where they found two plates on a table. One plate held freshly baked chocolate chip cookies that had been cooked right in the lab so as to fill the entire space with their scrumptious smell. The other plate held raw radishes. Half of the subjects were instructed to enjoy a couple of cookies while the remaining subjects were told to eat some radishes and not to touch the cookies. (If you're wondering if the researchers spied on the undergraduates to make sure they only ate the assigned food, the answer is yes.)

After the subjects ate their assigned food, the researchers gave them a poppycock reason for why they needed to stay in the lab for an extra fifteen minutes. While the subjects waited, the researchers invited them to kill time by helping the investigators study problem-solving abilities. In their final move, the researchers gave the subjects an unsolvable puzzle and timed how long each participant worked on the puzzle before giving up. By now, you've probably guessed where this is going. On average, the cookie eaters used their willpower to work on the puzzle for more than twice as long as the radish eaters who,

more venting. In doing so, she moves away from the childlike idea that the world should bend to her wishes to the adult idea that life comes with many unavoidable bumps.

How do you get her to do this? When she starts rolling out the complaints, consider asking, "Do you want my help with what you're describing, or do you just need to vent?" If she wants your help, she'll tell you. Even better, she might take your advice having actually asked for it. If she wants to vent, she'll tell you and you can sit back and know that just by listening you are offering meaningful support. More important, *she'll* start to learn that sometimes, just by listening, you are providing all the help she needs. Your daughter may be suspicious of your motives the first time you offer her the opportunity for unbridled venting. If she has grown used to getting (and, of course, reflexively rejecting) your advice when she complains, she may wonder what you're up to. But stick with it and be clear that you believe in the healing powers of "just venting." Soon, she'll come around. Don't expect that venting will—or should—fully replace complaining. But do take advantage of opportunities to help your daughter distinguish between problems that can and should be solved and problems that are best addressed by sharing them with someone who cares.

If the content of your daughter's venting strikes you as totally unfair and you feel compelled to weigh in, consider saying, "I have a different take on the situation. Do you want to hear it?" Should she say yes, carry on. Should she say no, bite your tongue and find comfort in the knowledge that your daughter is now aware that she shouldn't mistake your silence for a tacit endorsement of her views.

Congratulate yourself when you can get your daughter to advance to venting, because there will be times when you won't even be able to get how she expresses her displeasure *up*

The second, utterly exasperated message:

Hi Lisa, Mark again, it's about ten thirty Tuesday night. I just tried to talk to Sammy about the test but she's holed up in her room and won't discuss it. She's such a good student—I just don't get it. I'm thinking that maybe she shouldn't go to the summer camp she was planning on and it would be better for her to go to a science program I just found online. I've got a small window for getting the camp deposit back, so please call as soon as you can.

The third, relieved-but-still-confused message:

Mark here, it's six forty-five on Wednesday morning. I just saw Sammy and she told me that she emailed her chemistry teacher last night and he got right back to her. They've arranged to go over what she didn't understand and he's going to let Sammy correct her test to recover some lost points. Sorry about all the messages. No need to call me back.

I called him back. It was clear that Samantha had put her dad through an emotional wringer and that he deserved some empathy, as well as an explanation for his daughter's confusing behavior. I knew Mr. B. well enough to know that he was a calm and reasonable guy who was likely baffled by what had transpired with his daughter. And I knew Samantha well enough to know that she had probably been upset from the minute she got her chemistry test back, yet she gave her dad the impression that she didn't care about the grade and accused him of overreacting. What gives? Externalization, that's what. Externalization is a technical term describing how teen-

rid of an uncomfortable feeling. And not just anyone will take on her uncomfortable feeling; it has to be someone who really loves her. Externalization is a profound form of empathy. It goes beyond feeling *with* your daughter to the point of actually feeling something *on her behalf*. When teens complain, they own their discomfort, will often accept your empathy, and may even allow you to help them address the source of their misery. When they externalize, they want you to accept ownership of the offending feeling and will prevent you from giving it back.

It's the difference between "Mom, I want to tell you how uncomfortable this very hot potato I'm holding is and see if you've got any good ideas for how I might manage it" and "Mom, take this hot potato, I don't want to hold it anymore. And hang on to it for a while."

Externalization is a strange and subtle process that helps make adolescence manageable—for your daughter. Teenagers spend the better part of their time with peers who are also trying to harness their emotions and may not be able to offer useful support. Put another way, how do you get your best friend to take your hot potato if she can barely manage the potatoes she's already got? When teenagers feel overwhelmed by their feelings and need to do *something*, they find a loving parent and start handing out potatoes. Lucky for your girl, but not so lucky for you. Parents on the receiving end of an externalization often don't know what hit them. All they know is that they, like Samantha's father, suddenly feel really upset about their daughter's problem but can't engage her in addressing it.

For the most part, there's not much that you can do about externalizations. You will rarely, if ever, be able to identify an externalization at the moment it occurs. And talking with your daughter about her behavior won't prevent her from

at Sara's Halloween party." Maya was floored. Camille and Sara had found their way to a truce by the end of seventh grade and, without rekindling their old friendship, got along well enough to spend the summer hanging out in the same large group at the community pool. In fact, Camille and Sara had recently had a good time working together on a group project, and Maya had hopefully assumed that they'd put their seventh-grade squabble behind them.

Without offering an explanation for why she hadn't been invited, Camille showed Maya the party pictures Sara had posted online. Clearly, Camille was one of the few eighth-grade girls not at the party. The sight of the pictures poked the bruise Maya carried from Sara having told classmates about Camille's bedwetting. Hurt and angry, Maya impulsively called Sara's mother, a longtime acquaintance, to ask why Camille had been left out of the party. Sara's mom, offended by Maya's tone, explained that Camille had posted online that "Halloween parties are for babies" shortly after news got out that Sara was planning to host one. Not surprisingly, Sara decided that it was best not to invite Camille.

By calling Sara's home, Maya made things worse between the girls and created an awkward situation with Sara's mother. The impulse to call came from a loving, protective place, but the call was a mistake. In retrospect, Maya saw that Camille was probably angry with herself for the fresh conflict she had created and was unsure about how to straighten things out. Camille's hot potato handoff was subtle, but effective. Had Camille gone to her mother and tearfully said, "Things were going better with Sara and now I've made a mess and I don't know what to do," Maya would have tried to help Camille repair the damage. By seeming neutral while showing Maya pictures of the party, Camille got Maya to become upset on her behalf.

surprised by how rarely a plan even needs to be made once some time has passed.

Befriending Distress

Girls get upset about getting upset. Sometimes, a girl knows what's wrong but is confused by the intensity of her feelings. At other times, she's rattled by emotions that seem to come out of left field. For instance, one of my friends recently told me that her fourteen-year-old daughter came to her in a panic saying, "I'm crying, but I don't know why!" When I find myself with a girl who is shaken by a feeling she doesn't understand, I start by reassuring her that mental health is like physical health: mentally healthy people get upset, just like physically healthy people get sick. We only worry when a person can't recover.

Of course it's exhausting for you and your daughter if she contracts and recovers from several emotional maladies each week, but as we know from Anna Freud, "fluctuations and extreme opposites" are to be expected in teenagers. In the "When to Worry" section at the end of this chapter, we'll address what you should do if your daughter *doesn't* recover from her psychological flus. But most of the time, girls do bounce back, and they are helped when adults reassure them that ups and downs are part of life. Better yet, we can let girls know that their emotions are actually the product of a highly developed (but, for teenagers, not so finely tuned) system that provides critical feedback about how their lives are going and the quality of the choices they're making. If being with a particular friend always leaves your daughter feeling as if she's been stepped on, it's probably time for her to reconsider that friend-

a name for a feeling and talking about that feeling with someone who cares go a long way toward bringing it down to size. Try, "I know how much you wanted to be on varsity and that you are really disappointed. The outcome hurts." Using specific words to describe the cause of her tears ("disappointed" and "hurts") helps to contain her uncomfortable feelings. For this tactic to work, your tune must match your lyrics. Regardless of the accuracy of your words, they're only useful if delivered in a tone that expresses warmth *and* your total confidence that your daughter will find a way to bounce back. If you're obviously alarmed while offering verbal comfort, only the alarm comes through. Your calm, empathetic, and detailed description of what she's going through helps to ease painful emotions by communicating that your daughter's not in it alone. Once her feeling comes down to size, she may be ready to learn from it or let it go. It's hers to do with as she wishes.

You might worry that putting words to your daughter's emotions will only make them more real and, as a result, worse. But that's not what usually happens. If you want to make things worse, try talking your daughter *out of* what she's feeling. Perhaps you've already attempted this (most loving parents have) and discovered that she only tightened her grip on her distress. It might have gone something like this:

Your daughter: "MOM—we can't go out of town *that* weekend! That's two weeks before finals! I will NEVER get my work done."

You: "Oh honey, you'll be fine. You can review in the car and you'll have plenty of time to study when we get back."

Your daughter: "Are you NUTS! It's like you *want* me to fail!"

When feelings are minimized, girls often turn up the volume to make sure they, and their feelings, are heard. This is unpleasant for you and it definitely doesn't help your daugh-

girls tend to manage their hard feelings by talking about them. The upside? By seeking out their friends or parents for help, girls put themselves in touch with valuable social support and take a smart, mature approach to dealing with stress. The downside? Talking about problems at length can turn into what psychologists call rumination—focused attention on distress—and cause feelings to take on a life of their own. Rumination can lead to depression and anxiety, especially in teenage girls.

In contrast, boys often deal with being upset by distracting themselves. They put their energy into not thinking about it or they focus on something else, such as their schoolwork, video games, or sports, if they are suffering. This isn't necessarily a good thing. As boys move through adolescence, they sometimes silence their emotions because, as scholars who study boys note, they learn to equate feelings with femininity and femininity with degradation. Sadly, boys punish one another—usually with slurs about sexual orientation—for doing anything that could be construed as effeminate. Whereas girls commune to dissect and analyze their feelings, boys save face with their peers by seeming invulnerable or insensitive. The upside? Boys are less likely than girls to ruminate and turn their distress into depression or anxiety. The downside? As the psychologists Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson point out, boys learn to substitute anger for all other feelings and are more likely than girls to get into trouble for aggressive behavior.

When used in moderation, distracting oneself can be a terrific strategy for harnessing painful emotions. To be sure, focusing on problems, putting them into words, and learning from distress can be useful *to a point*, but many girls continue to discuss problems well past the helpful mark. If you see that happening, encourage your daughter to take a page out of the

younger because the touchstones of childhood connect them with simpler, less emotional times. As we know, girls like to retreat to established base camps when the world feels overwhelming. Well into late adolescence girls will sometimes snuggle stuffed animals, watch children's movies, or reread their favorite childhood books when stressed. If she's not in the mood to talk, see if your daughter wants to watch *The Incredibles* (because really, what *can't* be cured by watching every scene with Edna, the supersuit designer?). If that doesn't work, see if she wants to join you for a trip to the gym or help you make holiday decorations. Here's the point: girls can seem to be hiding from a problem or putzing around when, in fact, they are using effective tactics for helping themselves feel better. Tune in to how *your* daughter gets a handle on her feelings—the approach will be entirely her own—and suggest or support her strategies when she needs them.

At times, you may be able to anticipate situations where providing distraction or wordless emotional support might be in order. If you know that the job interview might not go well, consider having the family dog join you in the car when you pick your daughter up from it. Or pack her favorite comfort food for a snack. For your sake and your daughter's, remember that there are lots of ways to harness feelings, and only some of them involve talking. Wordless gestures go a long way, do their best work when presented without flourish, and do not foreclose the possibility of talking about feelings later.

Rumination isn't the only emotional challenge that favors girls. Studies find that girls, more than boys, experience *vicarious* social stress. In other words, when a girl talks to her friend about her emotional distress, the friend is likely to become distressed as well. And what do girls do when they become upset? They talk with one another. As a result, one girl's psychological pain can catalyze a powerful response in the com-

young teens become regular users of computers and cell phones. This coincidence can cripple developing emotion-regulation skills if teenagers get into the habit of reaching for their phones or computers at the first whiff of a feeling. Girls who go online instead of sitting with their emotions—even if that emotion is just boredom—don't learn from what they are feeling or develop the skills they need to help themselves feel better.

It's not unusual for me to see girls in my practice who turn to technology when they're upset, but the most compelling example of this was Brooke, a boisterous eighth grader sent to me by a local neurologist. Brooke had stress headaches, and the neurologist was hopeful that psychotherapy would ease them by getting to the bottom of what was causing her stress. In our sessions, Brooke spent a lot of time telling me about the social drama that she and the other members of her tribe stirred up throughout the school day and then continued into the evening over social media. She fought frequently with the boys and girls in her circle and would describe to me—with what seemed to be remarkably *little* stress—the creative insults she delivered online to “even the score” for any meanness that came her way. From what I could tell, the artistry of Brooke's insults gave her a great deal of social power with girls in her group, but the guys weren't afraid to take her down a few pegs.

In the fall of her ninth-grade year, Brooke's boyfriend announced the end of their relationship online and cruelly detailed his complaints about her on a site used by their friends. Proudly, Brooke told me about how she had paid him back by posting screen shots of the affectionate texts he'd sent during their relationship, embellished now, of course, with her special flavor of ridiculing commentary.

Given that I often find myself taking care of teens on the *receiving* end of social cruelty, it was hard to hear Brooke's de-

She never had to reflect on what was happening inside of her or find a way to help herself feel better. The instant Brooke sensed a feeling she didn't like, she grabbed her phone and visited the feeling on someone else. She never even knew that she was in pain. All she knew was that she *needed* her phone.

There's more to how Brooke's system "worked." The far and instantaneous reach of digital technology made it easy for her to stir up a lot of drama, and do so quickly. Brooke didn't have to focus on her painful feelings when she could focus on the social explosions she was setting off. At root, I believe that Brooke was badly hurt when her boyfriend dumped her. Rather than tuning in to her distress about the end of the relationship, she turned her attention to following the social media storm her retaliatory messages inspired. Brooke's well-oiled reflex to go on the offensive created a destructive, self-reinforcing cycle. When she was upset, she attacked. When she attacked, she felt better because she was in the driver's seat, not the one being run over. From there, she could focus on the unfolding social drama, not her own painful feelings. Brooke's attacks provided short-term pain relief while setting the stage for more emotional distress (and, sadly, headaches) to come. She was mistreating her peers and they would soon return the favor. And when they did, she'd attack.

Brooke provides one example of how girls turn to digital technology to manage painful feelings instead of finding ways to ease their own distress or seeking the support of kind, non-virtual relationships. I've seen other girls turn to their phones every time they feel lonely. Rather than wondering about the reasons for their loneliness or making plans to get together with a potential friend, they search online for an instant connection or at least an immediate distraction from their isolation. Or girls start posting when they feel forgotten or marginalized. Instead of losing themselves in a book they

scheduling. Girls who run from one activity to the next can suffer from unnecessary stress and, as we know, become disconnected from their families. But girls with too much time on their hands are more likely to misuse digital technology. As with most things in life, you'll want to help your teenager strike a healthy balance between these two extremes.

Look for opportunities to separate your daughter from technology for extended stretches of time. Demanding jobs, summer camps, and family trips can require—or inspire—long breaks from digital technology. Teenagers can be more willing to go along with no-tech trips if they are allowed to catch up with the digital world at preplanned times. While away from home, some families develop a rule that everyone is allowed to check his or her phone and computer for a half hour each morning and evening but otherwise agree to go off the grid.

Containing the amount of time your daughter spends on digital media—either through daily limits or longer periods of separation—will not, in and of itself, build her capacity to harness her emotions and become a self-sufficient problem solver. But limiting her digital access helps create the conditions that allow her to get to know her feelings. If she can't turn to a digital device every time she's upset, she will find other—probably better—ways to manage.

I wish I could tell you that I was able to help Brooke tune in to her distress and check her impulses to go online. In truth, she was reluctant to trade in her well-worn and surprisingly effective (if costly) tactics for what I was offering: the suggestion that getting to know her emotional pain might help her to make better choices *and* decrease the physical pain of her headaches. To make matters worse, Brooke's mother had long supported Brooke's habit of turning to digital technology when anything went wrong.

was ‘starving.’” Sandra didn’t like being interrupted at work but couldn’t resist offering solutions or advice. Before long, Sandra found herself spending part of each evening trying to help Brooke predict the next day’s challenges. Even in ninth grade, Sandra was still helping Brooke pack her book bag each night, study for upcoming tests, and tackle every problem she could anticipate.

With her detailed knowledge and guidance of Brooke’s high school life, Sandra looks like the all-time helicopter parent. And while there are certainly some teens who resist their helicopter parent’s intrusions, Brooke belonged to the large group who invite and come to depend on them. In other words, helicopter parents are often created via a two-way process: the daughter seeks the parent’s help for managing nearly every problem that comes her way and the parent agrees to provide the help. The more help the parent provides, the less capable the daughter becomes at managing on her own. As time goes on and challenges grow, the girl seeks more help from her parent and the parent continues to step in, recognizing that the stakes are higher than ever before. While it may be easy to let a girl go without lunch in sixth grade, few parents would feel comfortable telling their imploding daughter to just figure it out when it comes to registering for college entrance exams.

Looked at from the outside, the solution to Brooke and Sandra’s dilemma seems easy. Sandra should cut Brooke off, stop answering every text, and expect Brooke to manage her feelings or figure out her problems on her own. In the big picture, Sandra was well aware that Brooke was too dependent on her and lacked basic coping skills. But in the day-to-day, Sandra couldn’t resist helping her daughter when asked because she, like all loving parents, hated to see her child struggle. And every good parent tries to improve on the parenting they got;

Harnessing Emotions: When to Worry

Though it's exhausting for you, your daughter, and, sometimes, everyone in a five-mile radius, try to keep in mind that all is well if your daughter's feelings swing from high to low. As we know, normally developing teenagers are calm and rational one minute, wildly elated the next, and brooding not long after. So long as your daughter's feelings are all over the map, she's probably doing fine. You should worry if your daughter's mood is consistently somber or crabby, goes to frightening extremes, is dominated by anxiety, or if she uses self-destructive measures to cope with her feelings.

Recognizing Adolescent Mood and Anxiety Disorders

Teenagers have ups and downs, but if they're down day after day something could be wrong. Clinical depression, a psychological illness that goes far beyond feeling blue, affects roughly 5 percent of all teenagers and is more likely to occur in girls than boys. If your daughter shows several of the classic signs of clinical depression—sadness, not enjoying life, changes in her appetite, sleep, or activity levels, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, or difficulty concentrating—for many days in a row, consider having her evaluated for a mood disorder. Should your daughter express suicidal feelings, call her primary care provider immediately; if she indicates that she might hurt herself, take her to an emergency room.

Unfortunately, it is not widely known that the symptoms of depression in teenagers are rarely the same as the symptoms in adults. Instead of being sad and gloomy, depressed teens are more likely to be highly irritable with most people, most of the time. Living with a teenager who suffers from this form of

when there's no real threat to be managed, or even when the threat is a small one, such as a quiz on a topic the girl knows well. Girls often talk about being stressed or anxious, so it can be easy to dismiss their concerns, but a full 10 percent of teenagers may suffer from full-blown anxiety disorders, which, like clinical depression, are also more likely to occur in girls than boys.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the murky picture I'm painting of adolescent mood and anxiety disorders, I've got good news for you. First, you don't need to try to make any subtle diagnostic distinctions before seeking help. Psychiatric diagnoses morph constantly and have become vastly complex. If you're worried that something's wrong, get an evaluation from a trusted clinician. A second bit of good news is that there's an easy way to know if something's wrong. Your daughter's moods are grounds for concern if they interfere with her progressive development.

Several years ago I worked with a seventeen-year-old girl suffering from such profound social anxiety that she refused to attend school. She was certain that she was being scrutinized by classmates who stood ready to ridicule her if she got mayonnaise on her cheek while eating her sandwich or if she stammered while speaking in class. She rarely left her home, was so self-conscious that she wouldn't order her own meal if she went out to dinner with her parents, and was completing her junior year through an online program. We threw our weight behind getting her anxiety under control. Though she was progressing academically, her out-of-control emotions had stopped her from parting with childhood (her parents still had to care for her as if she were very young) or joining a new tribe.

It's your daughter's job to grow along the strands described in this book, and if her moods are getting in the way, she needs

who fall into the habit of using self-destructive tactics to numb pain will *age* as time passes, but they don't *grow up*.

Your daughter isn't just leaving childhood behind, fitting herself into a network of peers, and trying to get a handle on her supercharged emotions—she's also figuring out what to make of the adults she has to deal with every day. When girls become teenagers, they stop buying everything we're selling. They still trust some adults, but they watch us carefully and are quick to see our flaws. They know our rules but often feel compelled to chart their own course. Next, let's consider how these forces, and others, play out as teenagers come to terms with adults and the power they exercise.