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# ChangemakerTeens

The World Is Waiting For You...



## Parent Changemaker Pathway

### Request #5: Support

# If you SUPPORT me as I try new things, I will become responsible.

## Support vs. Rescue

“I forgot my lunch!” “We’re swimming in gym class today and I forgot my bathing suit!”  
“Everyone is going to the movies but I don’t have any money!” “Today is band and I don’t have my flute!”

If I had a nickel for every time I got a frantic phone call from school, I’d be rich beyond my wildest dreams. But I don’t. So I’m not. I am, however, the proud winner of ultra high miles on my car because of all the trips to school and back. Woohoo! Enough already! There must be a better way to get our kids through high school....AND LIFE!

Well, there is. And it begins by making a distinction between support and rescue. One of the definitions of support is “to aid” while the definition of rescue is “to bring out of danger”. Now, I don’t really think that needing money for a movie is a life threatening situation, but a teen would definitely define it as a crisis, don’t you agree?

The act of supporting someone is actually based on courage. Building and growing their courage and helping them learn to “do” by themselves; to figure out a solution by themselves. On the other hand, rescue is fear or crisis based. Big difference. So every time I jump on my white horse (I mean my red Mazda) and ride on out to the High School, lunch or bathing suit or money in hand, I’m doing my teen a disservice. I’m rescuing my teen, not supporting her. And that doesn’t help her grow toward independence. If we continuously rescue our kids, they will be less responsible, less “street wise”. I don’t know of a single parent, even the most lazy and uninspired, who would want that for their adult children.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons here is that there won't be any consequences for their actions. If they forget their lunch every day, they're going to be hungry when they get home. If they forget their homework again, they're going to get a bad grade.

With any luck, they will figure out that they don't like being hungry so they won't forget their lunch for the sixth time in a row. Let them feel the consequences. And I get it. It's soooo hard to do when it's your little pumpkin crying on the phone. Yeah, I get it. But realize that we're growing independent, responsible young adults here and this is how you do it. Of course I understand that parents feel the need to both support AND rescue, depending on the situation. I've rescued my 4 kids many times myself. The problem is that parents are more fearful now.

Some of that fear is justified, some is not. If my daughter gets a flat tire on the highway at night, you better believe I'm rescue mama. But if she has a flat tire in my driveway? How can I support you, sweetie? This is a jack...this is the spare...

The time to mold our teens into responsible, independent young adults is NOW, while we still have their attention. Just realize that the type and level of support that our children need from us change as they grow. How do we know what they need in each new situation? We ASK them!

There are 5 distinct types of support that people of all ages crave and search for:

- \* Financial - Managing money
- \* Emotional - Teaching awareness
- \* Physical - Caring for the body
- \* Intellectual - Learning styles (there are 8, by the way)
- \* Spiritual - Why are we here? Our purpose

Most of the time, it's obvious what kind of support your teen needs, but sometimes it's a little more vague. It's your job to remain fluid, open and pay attention to what they say they need from you. And really try to focus on the support without judging them. Respectful support should be given on an individual basis, without a set timetable or desire for your child to succeed at a particular thing. The "courage based" level of support is definitely more work up

front. However, the long term benefits are definitely worth the effort. Now your teen knows how to change a tire or find money in a pinch.

Ready for some examples?

**EXAMPLE #1:**

Jordan was thrilled to be offered a job with Outward Bound. Working for the adventure company had been a goal of his since childhood and finally the time had come! He was due to leave bright and early the next morning for his job as the photographer for an Outward Bound Adventure and he couldn't wait. But while packing his bag, he made the horrifying discovery that he had forgotten to buy the film for his camera! It was expensive and he didn't have the money because he hadn't started the job yet! What's a mother to do?

1. Rescue Option: Give him \$50 and drive him to the store at 10 o'clock at night.
2. Support Option: How can I support you in figuring this out? What are your options? After discussing the situation with his mom, Jordan called his supervisor at Outward Bound and arranged to get an advance on his pay so he could buy the film when he got there the next morning.

Instead of handing him the money, his mom taught him about planning, budgeting and being more organized. Win/Win!

**EXAMPLE #2:**

Jenny wants a new doll. Not exactly a crisis, but you know how kids are when they desperately want something.

1. Rescue Option: Buy her the doll to get her to stop whining and crying.
2. Support Option: How can I support you in getting your doll?

Jenny does odd jobs for her mom to earn the money for the doll. Together they go to buy the doll, but Jenny agonizes over how hard she had to work to get the money and decides she would rather keep the money! Lesson learned about patience, budgeting, and the value of money.

**EXAMPLE #3:**

Sam has a big project due at school and is too overwhelmed to even start.

1. Rescue Option: Let me help you get started. And worse, probably do the project and finish the project too.
2. Support Option: What support do you need for this project?

**Note\*\*\*** Saying, “How can I support you” in this instance, places the burden of helping squarely on your shoulders. It implies that you are willing to do the work FOR your teen. Instead, say, “What support do YOU need?” or “What support are YOU going to need to finish this?”

Now your teen can think about what he really needs to get going on his project. Maybe he needs you to sit with him at the kitchen table to keep him on task. Maybe he needs you to physically hold the parts to his creation. Who knows? But the important thing is you are supporting him, not “doing” for him.

So the next time you get that frantic phone call from your teen and you race out the door, stop! Ask yourself if you are supporting or rescuing? Yes, each have their place in the job of parenting, but now you have the knowledge to make sure that your answer will serve your teen on their journey to adulthood!

## Practice Support

It's time to build on your previous skills involving respect, listening, understanding and appreciation to get in tune with what kind of support your teenager needs. Remember to stay flexible and assess the unique qualities of your son or daughter as you think of meaningful ways to support them. Your presence at a baseball game might mean more to him than helping him through a loss after the fact. Or, financially supporting your daughter's flying lessons might be a more concrete show of faith than telling her she can do whatever she sets her mind to.

Remember that the type and level of support that your kids need will change over time. One day they may crave your emotional support with a breakup, and the next day they may want no support from you at all! Stay fluid! Go with the flow.

### **PRACTICE #1 - IMPROVE**

Write down what kinds of financial, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual support that you offer your teen. Note which areas are the least supported and think of ways that you can increase your level of support in that area. Practice this as a routine and you will add depth to your support repertoire.

### **PRACTICE #2 - TRADITION**

Create a tradition of periodic outings with your teen. Just the two of you. Make it a routine your teen can depend on. Go out to their favorite restaurant every other week. Quality time at this age sets the stage for regular communication; critical for a good parent/teen relationship. All you have to do is be there and engage!

### **PRACTICE #3 - SAY IT**

By now, you must be expecting the practice of saying these things out loud! Here's one more for you. Start including the word "support" in your conversations with your teen. Again, it's a word that is not often used in normal conversations between parents and teens, but we're going to change all that!

You don't have to guess what your teen needs, ask them directly. Simply say, "What kind of support do you feel you need from me (or us) right now?" Open up the lines of communication

around this subject and include it in your language from now on. When they tell you what they need, don't be judgmental, critical or defensive. Just use your listening skills to really hear what they have to say.