



grace STUDENTS



Leader

**RESOURCES**



## Online blogs and podcasts:

- [Fulleryouthinstitute.org/podcast](https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/podcast)
- <https://rootedministry.com/podcast-series/rooted-youth-ministry/>

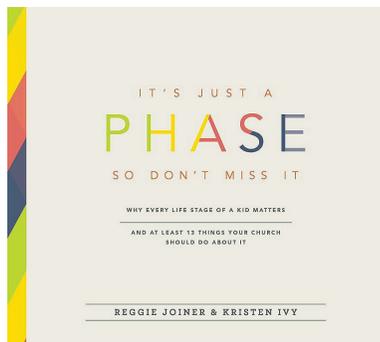


## Articles & documents:

- 11 things I wish I had known when I started high school – good for 8th grade leaders to send to their students
- Questions for coaches to ask when they meet with leaders
- Get to know your students survey
- Ways to interact with scripture
- 10 truths every middle schooler should know
- Bullying conversation guide
- Divorce conversation guide

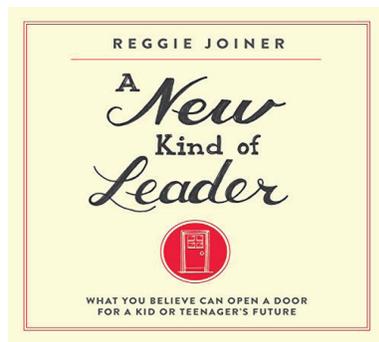


# Recommended Books



## It's Just A Phase So Don't Miss It

Reggie Joiner & Kristen Ivy



## A New Kind of Leader

Reggie Joiner



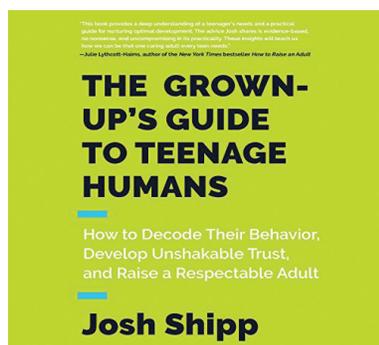
## Playing For Keeps / Losing Your Marbles

Reggie Joiner, Elizabeth Hansen, & Kristen Ivy



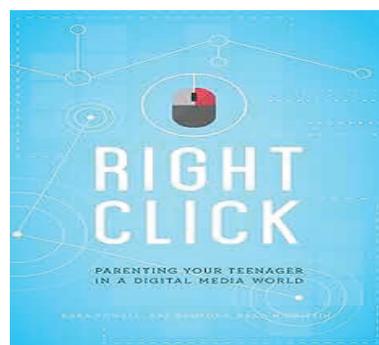
## Lead Small

Reggie Joiner,  
Tom Shefchunas



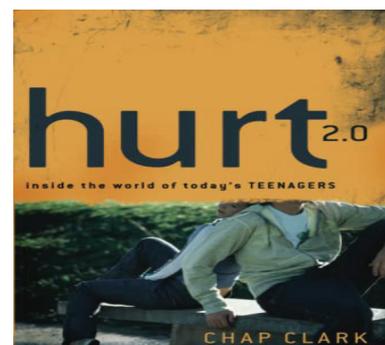
## The Grown-Up's Guide to Teenage Humans

Josh Shipp



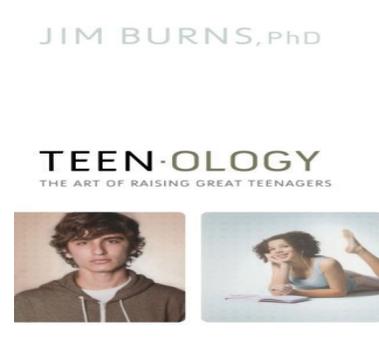
## Right Click: Parenting Your Teenager in a Digital Media World

Kara Powell



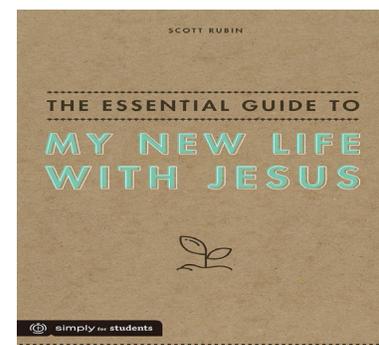
## Hurt 2.0

Chap Clark



## Teenology

Jim Burns



## My New Life with Jesus

Scott Rubin

# Best Practices for Leading a Small Group

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

These words of Jesus resonate throughout our ministry as we continue to create a place where students can come to love and be loved. This is lived out in our small groups and in pursuing the following items as a leader that will free you to love and be loved.

## **Prepare and follow the plan and stick to the heart of what we are trying to do.**

- Follow the Holy Spirit's leading as you interpret the plan for your group.
- The curriculum won't be perfect, but you can help make it better!
- Prepare for the tension between what students like and what they need.
- Ask great questions, including "What if?" "Why?" and "How?" and try to avoid asking questions that can be answered by yes or no.
- Let the students talk.
- Don't be afraid of silence, it gives students some time to think.
- Be delicate when correcting.
- Be honest if you don't know an answer.
- Ask the students if they have questions.

## **Love your students with all your heart, even when they don't want you to.**

It's all about relationships! Be bold with your students, it's worth it...

## **Try to have at least two significant small group events per year.**

We need one month's notice, or it can't be on site at Grace.

## **Include and welcome new students.**

Because that is what we do! You may occasionally have visitors from other service hours.

**Create as many outside connections (e-mail, gatherings, texts, phone calls, even mail) as you can with your students.** Go to their school events (games, performance, etc.) when possible.

## **Be as consistent as possible and always be on time or early.**

We start Small Groups exactly on time. Please don't end your groups early. Don't let "community time" turn into crazy distraction time.

## **Let your co-leader and one of the staff know when you can't be there.**

We never cancel a group. Let the staff know as soon as you are able if you need them to find a substitute leader for a weekend.

## **Ask for help when you need it!**

We will be around all weekend for you. We're also free during the week sometimes! We have to know if you are meeting somewhere other than your room. Do not take students off site during a normal small group time.

**Make attending the retreats a key priority.**

**Make our leadership gatherings a key priority.**

We need our time together for development and encouragement! Check the calendar for specific dates and times.

**Let your students talk more than you. Don't give long sermons; let them talk!**

**Don't settle for easy answers. If you feel like a student has more to offer, encourage them to go further and deeper.**

**Ask students if they have questions.**

Great conversations can happen when you let the student ask questions. Encourage them to deal with the material on their own terms. Create a climate where people feel the freedom to ask any question.

**Don't move to a new question too quickly.**

Encourage multiple students to answer a single question. After one student answers a question, ask, "Would anyone like to add to that?" or "Does everyone agree/disagree with that?"

**Require and maintain confidentiality.**

This allows students to open up because they feel their environment is safe. However, don't keep potentially dangerous information to yourself (e.g., abuse, suicide, destructive intentions, etc.)

**Remember, the goal of all games and activities is inclusion, encouragement and fun!**

**Get connected to the parents of students in your group if you can.**

Parents would LOVE a weekly update. Invite them to a SG event.

**Don't be discouraged when you have a bad group time. There is not a small group leader alive that has not had at least one group time where they felt they did not connect well/lead well.**

**Cell phones should be off and away during anything.**

Even during small group events. Let's encourage live togetherness! We should probably set a good example in that as leaders.

**Be imperfect, make mistakes and be honest about them with the students.**

**Don't lead without knowing where you want to take the students. All conversations are organic and can have a life of their own. However, you ought to know your teaching objective(s) and keep it (them) in mind.**

**Pray. Pray again, we all need it!**



## How to talk to boys And get them to talk back: 7 tips you can use

As much as we are not huge proponents of overfocusing on gender differences, there is no escaping the social reality of boys. Learning about the structure of the boy world (or refreshing ourselves, for those of us who were once boys) gives us a bit more of a compass for having meaningful conversations with the boys we care about.

That's where Rosalind Wiseman comes in. Wiseman not only parents two boys, but also has researched the boy world on the ground through her cadre of over 200 middle school and high school advisors (plus a slate of parents). Their collective input delivers an impressive look into the ins and outs of boys' actual reality in social contexts in her recent book *Masterminds & Wingmen: Helping our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World*. Worth the price of the book alone is Wiseman's description of the "Act-Like-A-Man Box" that most guys eventually resign themselves to inhabit.

Below are seven insights for communicating effectively with adolescent boys:

### 1. Boys want to connect

They often just don't know how. Boys themselves attest to their need for parents and adults who are there for them, even though they may act like they could care less. So even when you get brushed off, don't give up on connection. Don't pull away permanently, even when he does temporarily.

### 2. Don't interrogate

One of Wiseman's boy's shares, "The first thing my mom says to me every day after school is, 'Tell me five things that happened at school today.' Five. She exhausts me." And when he can't remember five things or isn't in the mood to unpack his day immediately, she feels like he's hiding things and

he gets annoyed. So what can we do instead? First, recognize that the school day can be completely exhausting when you figure in the combination of academics with complex social dynamics. Wiseman suggests, "Your goal is to make the first few minutes stress-free. If you do this, he'll be much more likely to tell you about how his day was on his own. Try asking no questions when you see him." After some time, invite him to share one high and one low. And be willing to share your own. Then leave him alone.

### 3. Try the night

Most boys respond best when they're winding down later in the evening, or when they're going to bed. Even though this means staying up later for older teens, it's worth it occasionally to wait up and see if he's more receptive to sharing a conversation.

### 4. Boys usually say

"I'm fine, don't worry about it," when they're really feeling the complete opposite. They're trained to shrug away concern and show calm detachment. Offering a simple, "I'm here if you want to talk about it later" leaves a door open without forcing an interaction.

### 5. Offer them your help

But also a pathway to another adult. There are things your son won't want to tell you, but needs to tell someone. Most of the time that distinction needs to be made by him, not you. So how do you navigate all that while still making sure he's getting adult help? Here's a suggestion from Wiseman: "If ----- [whatever you're wondering about] ever happens to you, you know you can talk to me. Or if you don't want to talk to me, let's think of someone that you would like to talk to." Your son should have a few adult allies he can turn to that he knows will take him seriously and won't break his trust by telling you.

### 6. Do something together

Boys often talk more freely when they're sharing an activity—a sport you both like, going on a hike, playing video games together, or doing something you know he's interested in, whether or not you

share the interest. Household chores can also become conversation starters when they're shared rather than done individually. Stay away from phrases like, "Let's spend time together," or "I don't see you enough anymore," and instead offer something like, "Do you want to go to lunch?" Wiseman suggests, "Lunch has a definite beginning and end. Plus, you're feeding him." Brilliant. Be careful about raising the pressure for every experience together to be about deep bonding. That's likely to push him away.

### 7. Don't say these two things

First, never, ever, ever call him a girl (or say he runs/hits/throws/anything else like a girl). Ever. Aside from the fact that it's degrading to girls, you will lose some of the respect he has for you, and you could drain him of any personal dignity. Second, never say "I'll take care of this," or its many counterparts, in response to a problem he's facing. Taking over his battles will only cripple his ability to learn to face hard things, and will likely make him resent your control.

One more thing: Be prepared to be changed by what you hear. This is Wiseman's definition of listening. If we're actually paying attention to what our boys tell us, we have to be willing to change in response.

For more wisdom on leading and parenting adolescent boys, visit [fulleryouthinstitute.org](http://fulleryouthinstitute.org) and search "boys."

See Rosalind Wiseman, *Masterminds & Wingmen: Helping our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World* (New York: Harmony, 2013).



# How to talk to girls

## 6 tips for conversations with teenage girls

Adolescent girls—like boys—get wrapped up in the work of parting from childhood and moving toward adulthood. This is good, important, even necessary work. But for parents and other caring adults, it can feel painful, especially when it comes to communicating with girls. Your once open, easy conversation partner can transform overnight into a closed door of silence.

The good news is that we don't need to accept these transitions as relational dead ends. Girls need us more than ever in these years; they just need us in different ways and on different terms—their terms.

Psychologist Lisa Damour works daily with adolescent girls in both private practice and school-based settings. She has compiled her years of wisdom, experience, and research into a volume titled *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood*. This manual serves as a valuable resource for parents, leaders, teachers, and anyone else who is helping a young woman through the journey from childhood to adulthood.

When it comes to our conversations with teenage girls, here are a handful of helpful tips you can use in your next few interactions.

### 1. Practice your timing

Girls often feel like their parents pummel them with annoying questions. What makes them so annoying? Timing, for one thing. “A girl will bristle when her parents ask questions at the wrong time—when she’s deeply engaged in her work, already halfway out the door, or closing her eyes to catch a little extra rest on the couch on a quiet afternoon,” Damour suggests. Pick your moments rather than making every discussion a battle; the pushback may only be because the conversation is based on your timing and your turf. If you pitch a fastball question and miss, be willing to let it go and try again later. Maybe much later. Similar to adolescent boys, be prepared for girls’ openness to deeper conversations to shift later and later into the evening.

### 2. Let her answers shape the conversation

Girls despise conversations that start with preplanned direction, right answers, and adult agendas. Instead, they want questions fueled by our genuine interest in their lives and their thoughts. Let them put a topic on the table they’re open to exploring. Pick up a lead they’ve left you recently (even if it was in the form of

a complaint—e.g., about a teacher, coach, or friend). And hold your idea or probe for later. Great tools for these kinds of conversations include phrases like, “I wonder what that’s been like,” “Tell me more about that,” as well as other responses that mirror back something she just said (“So you’re getting excited about the overnighter with your friends next weekend.”)

### 3. Be the emotional dumping ground sometimes.

One conversational tactic of adolescent girls involves unloading their own uncomfortable feelings and complaints onto their parents so they don’t have to carry them alone. Damour helpfully reframes this practice: “Complaining to you allows your daughter to bring the best of herself to school.” Most often the teenager who is blowing off intense steam about incredulous teachers, annoying boys, and an unfair homework load is the same teenager who carries herself with relative cool and friendliness through the school day. She’s learning the adult skill of managing her emotions and responses, holding them until she’s in the presence of a trusted adult who can handle a day’s worth of pent up irritation and anger. Research

shows we all have a finite amount of willpower, and it turns out that teenage girls' willpower tends to run out right about the time they close our car door or drop on our couch after a full day at school. In these moments, we often need not do anything, fix anything, or even say anything helpful. Instead we serve the important function of a nonjudgmental, listening ear. If you must respond, Damour suggests offering a question like, "Do you want my help with what you're describing, or do you just need to vent?"

#### **4. Help her distract herself from ruminating on problems.**

One typical difference between adolescent girls and boys is that while boys tend to look for distraction when they're dealing with emotional distress, girls turn to talk. They're more likely to talk about feelings, and while that can be generally helpful, at times over-focusing on a problem can lead down roads of anxiety and depression—whether that problem is their own or one they've internalized from a friend. As a caring adult, one skill we can teach girls is to utilize distraction to cope with intense feelings. We might offer to do something together, change up her environment, pull her into fun or even goofy conversations, or serve together in some way that shifts the focus off the current problem.

#### **5. Move beyond her "veil of obedience."**

Damour highlights teenage girls' ability to keep nodding and smiling while utterly blocking out everything an adult is saying. Though guys can do this too, they're more likely to verbally disagree or at least look away. Girls, on the other hand, become masters at giving us what we want—compliance—while internally stuffing their own thoughts and feelings. Part of our work as parents and caring adults is to help girls put down these "veils of obedience" and engage with us when they disagree. While this is far less pleasant for us in the moment, in the long term it does girls a big favor because they will learn to advocate for themselves and their ideas. Next time a girl in your life seems to quietly agree with your assessment, instruction, or (let's be honest) lecture, pause and say, "I see you nodding, but I wonder what you really

think?" or, "I've just said a lot. I'd like to hear your thoughts and feelings about this, too." Or perhaps, "What feels right about what I've just said? What feels maybe not right?"

#### **6. Teach her to work toward repair—by modeling it.**

Conflict, struggles, and relationship ruptures are bound to happen with teenage girls, in particular as they work toward gaining autonomy from their parents. We can help girls grow in emotional intelligence in the midst of these strained relational moments by helping them learn to step outside themselves and take the perspective of the other person. This is a brain-growth task of adolescence, and our part in this work comes by modeling perspective-taking.

For example, after a heated conflict cools down, we may be able to offer a window into our response ("When you said those words, I felt this way, and responded by saying some harsh things in return. Looking back, I see where you were coming from, and here's where I was coming from. I'm sorry that my response hurt you. Let's figure out a way to move on.") Learning to repair relationships through building empathy must first happen in relationships supported by deep trust, meaning parents often bear the brunt of this work. However, the dividends of investing in emotional intelligence pay off in girls' relationships with peers and, eventually, families of their own.



# Helping Students in Crisis

Key points to remember	Talking to parents options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We NEVER promise “not to tell.”</li> <li>• Parents are responsible for their children and what their children know.</li> <li>• We are responsible for what a child tells us and you don't share.</li> <li>• Parents are always part of any solution.</li> <li>• We need to protect one another from gossip (“I know a kid at school who...”)</li> <li>• If you're not sure what to do call any of the Student Ministry staff.</li> <li>• If you sure it's bad call the Associate Pastor immediately. Especially in cases of suicide, abuse, or threats of violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can talk to your parents first, and then have them call me (for accountability &amp; confirmation).</li> <li>• We can go to your parents together and you can tell them (for safety and confidence).</li> <li>• We can go to your parents together and I can tell them.</li> <li>• I will be glad to talk to your parents for you. Note: this is last, because we want to help the students develop a healthy relationship with the parents. There will be occasions when it will be wise to take this step for the sake of all concerned.</li> </ul>

## Crisis Scenarios

<p>“I have a friend at school that ...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks for sharing and caring for your friend. Let's help!</li> <li>• Have you told your parents? (See Parent Options)</li> <li>• Have you told a school counselor?</li> <li>• The best way to help is to let appropriate adults know who can offer help.</li> <li>• Tell your parents</li> <li>• Tell a school counselor</li> <li>• Have your parents tell their parents and/or the school counselor</li> <li>• Pray for them and love them.</li> </ul> <p>“I have a friend here at church that ...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks for sharing and caring for your friend. Let's help!</li> <li>• Who is it?</li> <li>• We need to talk to Tim/Rob (and the student's small group leaders at some point).</li> <li>• Do your parents know? We may need to talk</li> </ul>	<p>to them so they can help you be a good friend through this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will need to talk to your friend and probably their parents. We may not be able to keep your telling us a secret.</li> <li>• Let's pray.</li> </ul> <p>“I am ...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love you. I want to help you.</li> <li>• Do your parents know?</li> <li>• Does your small group leader know?</li> <li>• I need to talk to Tim/Rob, do you want to be there?</li> <li>• For you to get help your parents must be involved. I know it scares you. Let's talk about the options. (Unless the parent is the issue.)</li> <li>• Let me pray for you.</li> </ul>
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