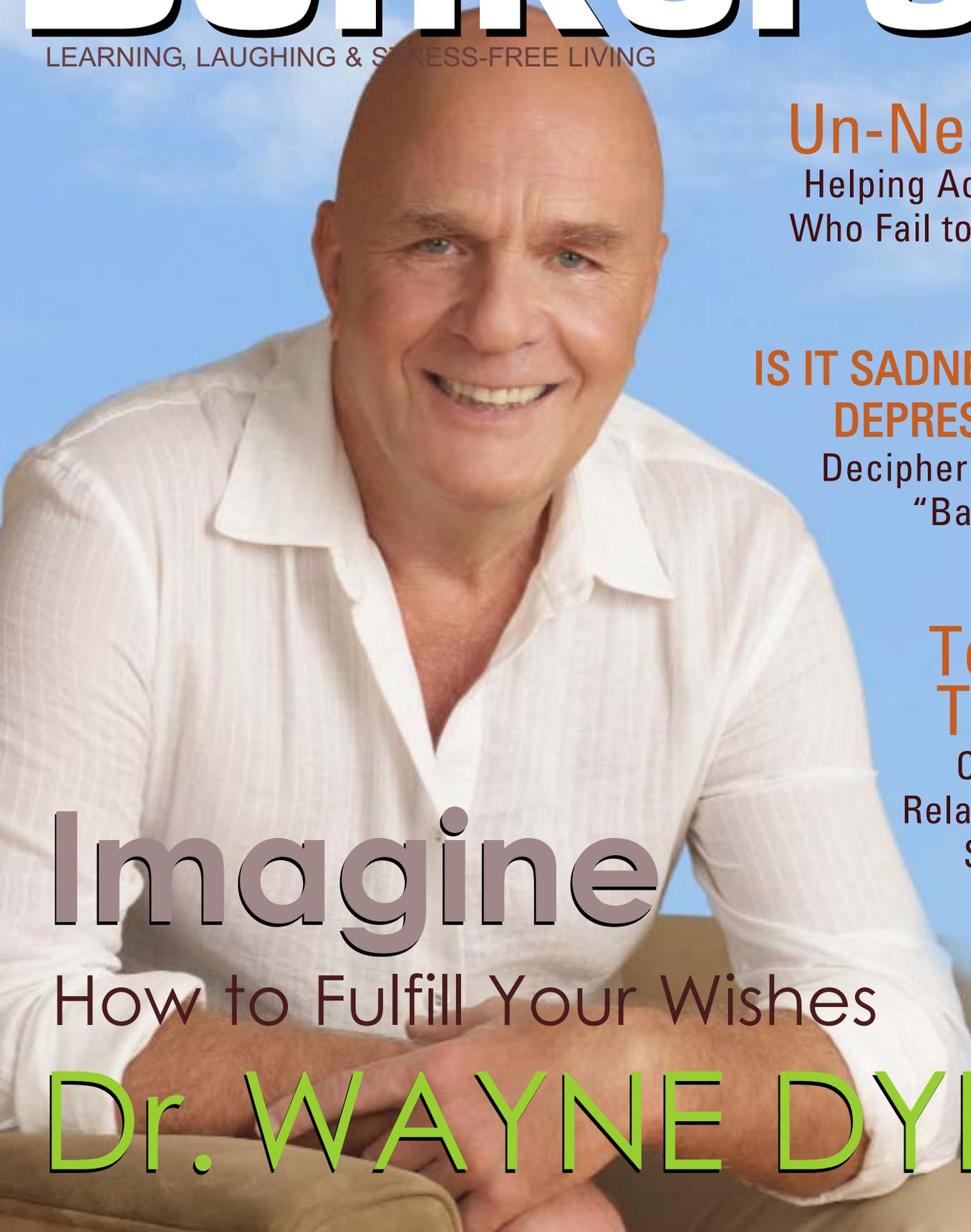




Going **Bonkers?**

LEARNING, LAUGHING & STRESS-FREE LIVING



Un-Nesting

Helping Adult Kids
Who Fail to Launch

IS IT SADNESS OR DEPRESSION?

Deciphering Your
"Bad Days"

Tough Times

Can Your
Relationship
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How to Fulfill Your Wishes

Dr. WAYNE DYER



Talking Tween

Managing Your Middle Schooler

By Dr. Jerry Weichman

The transition to middle school can feel like quite a gut check for parents. Mature topics that seem years away are suddenly front and center. In fact many parents claim that in hindsight, middle school was a tougher transition than high school.

From budding romantic relationships to the reality that experimenting with substances in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades is quite common, middle school is a strange time warp where kids feel too young for this but too old for that, and parents long for those easy elementary school years.

The shift in your child's personality may be subtle but over time parents notice that instead of a kid who wishes to please, their tween becomes someone who wants to establish independence, pushes back against rules or things they don't enjoy, and seems perpetually annoyed. However when armed with the right communication tools and openness to the changes associated with the tween years, parents can successfully navigate these rough waters.

Here are a few communication tips to keep you on course:

Fighting the One-Word Answer

For as much time as your tween spends online, texting, or talking to friends, you might find that they are much more closed off towards you than they used to be. You know the conversation well:

How was your day?

Fine.

What happened at school today?

Nothing.

One easy way to fight the one-word utterance is to just give your kid a little space while they transition from their school day to their home life. Typically an hour to themselves is enough time to decompress and your tween will be more available to talk about the day's events.

Don't Freak Out!

Tweens and teens shut down when their parents react over something they have shared with them. While your first reaction may be to yell, cry, eye roll, or even recoil in horror at the story or news your kid is

sharing, keep it in. Otherwise they will not feel comfortable sharing with you.

The single best way to keep the lines of communication open is to stay calm. Seriously, put on your poker face. Thank them for sharing that information with you. Ask them if they need any help or advice on the issue. Reapproach them once the dust settles.

Make a Date

It may seem obvious that you should spend quality one-on-one time with each of your children. Parents sometimes make the mistake of defining quality time as a weekend getaway or elaborate trip. While those are great, what is more important than the scope of your time together is the consistency.

Set weekly dates with your tween. Go out to lunch or dinner and let them pick the place. Put away the cell phones, iPads, and other devices and just be together. In the beginning you might feel a bit uncomfortable trying to figure out what to say but it is critical you don't fill that space with small talk.

Allow for the uncomfortable silence. The constantly-connected tween, when not allowed a cell phone or laptop to look at, will feel compelled to eventually fill the silence with conversation. Suddenly you will find yourself hearing about friends, teachers, and the daily dramas every tween endures.

Give a Kid a Break

As parents focus their efforts on keeping their middle schooler on the straight-and-narrow during the critical tween years, recognize that much of your parent-child interaction is negative or corrective in nature. Your kid needs to hear from you, on a very regular basis, what it is about them that specifically makes you proud. They need to know what it is that they are doing right. If nothing comes to mind immediately, give yourself a few minutes to compose a list of your child's positive attributes or behaviors. Write them down. Be specific. Now share some of these with them at least once a week. GB

About the Author

Jerry Weichman, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist focused solely on teen and preteen issues. Based out of his private practice at Hoag Hospital's Neurosciences Institute in Newport Beach, Dr. Jerry is also an author of a teen self-help book, *How to Deal*, and a noted public speaker on teen-related topics including parenting, bullying, and adolescent coping skills. Overcoming a lower leg amputation as a child to eventually become a Division I college football player provided Dr. Jerry with unique perspective on coping with – and overcoming – difficulties during the adolescence. For more information visit www.drjerryweichman.com

Successful Volunteering

If you want to feel good, volunteer!



Many of us are wrapped up with work and family, trying to make ends meet, so the idea of volunteering can seem like it's just another 'have-to' to write into the already crowded calendar. However, if you do it right, it can be a great stress reliever and a source of true joy in your life. The key to discovering that feeling is to let your passion guide you when you decide to volunteer. Here's how to get started:

✓ **Choose Wisely.** The most important aspect to volunteerism is to find what you love, and direct your energies into a charity or community organization that matches those passions. No matter your interest, you can match it to a cause that needs help. Just pick the right one, and your volunteer time will be a joy.

✓ **Watch Your Schedule.** Make sure you balance your volunteer time carefully so that your professional life and your family time doesn't take a critical hit. Most organizations will take as much time as you offer them, but if you only have an hour or two each week, they'll take that time, too.

✓ **Have Fun.** Helping others is its own reward, but it shouldn't feel like a chore. Even the most mundane task can be fun if you manage it with a sense of humor and passion for helping others.

Lisa Sellman is the author of a children's book, "The Legend of the Wolves of Gunflint Lake." (www.lisasellman.com)

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