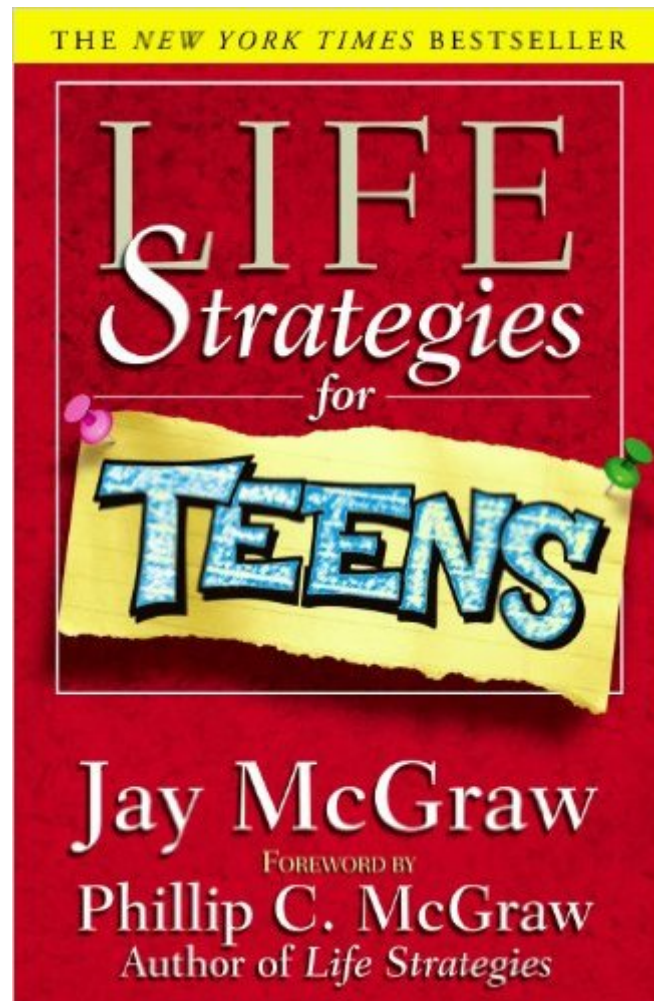


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Life Strategies For Teens (Life Strategies Series)



Synopsis

From the son of Dr. Phil McGraw comes Life Strategies for Teens, the New York Times bestselling guide to teenage success, and the first guide to teenage life that won't tell you what to do, or who to be, but rather how to live life best. Are you as tired as I am of books constantly telling you about doing your best to understand your parents, doing your homework, making curfew, getting a haircut, dropping that hemline, and blah, blah, blah? "Jay McGraw, from the Introduction Well, you don't have to be anymore! Employing the techniques from Dr. Phillip C. McGraw's Life Strategies, his son Jay provides teens with the Ten Laws of Life, which make the journey to adulthood an easier and more fulfilling trip. Whether dealing with the issues of popularity, peer pressure, ambition, or ambivalence, Life Strategies for Teens is an enlightening guide to help teenagers not only stay afloat, but to thrive during these pivotal years. Whether you are a teen looking for a little help, or a parent or grandparent wanting to provide guidance, this book tackles the challenges of adolescence like no other. Combining proven techniques for dealing with life's obstacles and the youth and wit of writer Jay McGraw, Life Strategies for Teens is sure to improve the lives of all who read it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this book after The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, and though Life Strategies has some good points, I thought 7 Habits was a much better book. The page layout of both books is shockingly similar...did they get the same graphic designer or what? Both books are similarly organized, though

for 7 Habits the organization makes sense while the "life laws" of Life Strategies seem to be in haphazard order. Both books are written by the sons of the authors of the famous adult versions. Both books promise to have the magic formula for success in life, presented so that teens can understand it. Yeah, right. Life Strategies does have some good points. Its presentation of goal setting is better than the one in 7 Habits, and its section on why you keep doing those problem behaviors is insightful (and reeks of a clinical psychologist father). More troublesome was the chapter on how "You Tell People How to Treat You". This chapter is about setting boundaries, a very useful "life law". However, it is stated that people who don't obey your boundaries are "sicko freaks who need therapy or worse". In my experience, I have found that there is a gradient between a perfectly healthy relationship and a horribly abusive relationship. People aren't going to treat you well all the time, and even abusive people do something right once in a while. Dividing everything into black and white doesn't work well for describing the nature of life. But what bothered me most about this book is its relentless promotion of the status quo. It is somehow assumed that your goals in life are to be popular and get good grades in school. The chapter on assimilating into the system is titled "You Either Get It, Or You Don't" and is described in the introduction as "how to get the L for Loser off your forehead". In later chapters you are advised to change your appearance to what will make you more acceptable to others (but don't let your peers talk you into taking drugs!), every stereotype about teens in school is repeated, and you are told that your parents won't respect you until your grades are excellent. What's wrong with that? In my nineteen years on this planet, I have found that being yourself is the best thing you can do for yourself. I don't particularly want to be popular. I'd rather think for myself. I follow the system when it suits me, but more important to me are my principles. The concept of following your principles is in 7 Habits, but not in Life Strategies, where following the crowd seems to be the only principle. If money is no object, there are some good ideas in Life Strategies for Teens which make the book worth the read. However, if you have to choose, both The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens and Teens Can Make It Happen are better than this uneven and sometimes contradictory book.

"Dad, trust me, when it comes to teens, you don't get it!" Thus, Mr. Jay McGraw told his Dad, Dr. Phil McGraw, that Dr. Phil was violating his own first rule for Life Strategies, You Either Get It or You Don't. Mr. Jay had wanted to use Life Strategies to improve his own life, and found that it took him 6 years (from age 13 to age 19) to translate the lessons into a teen perspective that made sense to Mr. Jay. Mr. Jay was naturally appalled when he found that Dr. Phil had a book contract to do a book on Life Strategies for teens. The project was reborn in Mr. Jay's hands. By the time Mr. Jay

was done, he was no longer a teen, having reached the ripe old age of 20. But his memory of teenage perspectives is strong and salty. Early in the book, he candidly points out that the teen did not buy this book. It was a gift from an adult, usually a parent. And that's a very good point -- one that I would like to comment on. I suggest that you read this book before giving it to anyone. That may be its greatest benefit. Mr. Jay does a good job of taking on the key psychological, social, and developmental challenges of the teenage years. As you visit these points of view, you can begin to see how your teenager might see you. For example, do you ever tell your teen stories about what it was like when you were your teen's age? I know I do. Mr. Jay points out that any self-respecting teen "knows" that those old lessons don't apply now. Times are much different and tougher now. Dad or Mom is just being "boring" again. Do you ever interrupt your teen? Mr. Jay indicates that that means "that Mom or Dad doesn't ever listen to me." That can cut off the possibility of communication. There's also a wonderful section on the roles that teenagers today choose to play (their social masks). All of a sudden it clicked. I saw each of our teenager's friends fitting neatly into one of these categories. I could suddenly predict how each would respond in any given situation. Wow! What a gift! Thank you, Mr. Jay!! What has happened is that a few new categories have been established since the Middle Ages when I was a teenager. I am very glad to get up-to-date. The book itself follows Dr. Phil's 10 laws. You can read my reviews of Life Strategies and the Life Strategies Workbook if you want to know more about them. Mr. Jay takes the perspective of what the payoff is from the teenage years. For example, he candidly points out that you can decide not to get good grades. But you have to understand that that means that you will get less respect from everyone, and have fewer choices after high school is over. Coming from a parent, that would have sounded preachy. Coming from Mr. Jay, it just sounds matter-of-fact. Many teenagers are into not reading anything they don't have to, so I don't know how many will read this book. From a psychological point of view, it probably should have been positioned as something like "Have Great Teen Years Without Being Hassled by Your Parents and Friends." The book needs more rebellion against the convention wisdom to be appealing. Regardless, it is great for us parents. Enjoy the examples, learn the role-playing, appreciate the angst, and avoid acting "boring." And by the time your teen is 24, you'll start to look pretty good in her or his eyes again. Be patient in the meantime. If you have a pretty good relationship with your teen, a possible approach is to start doing Life Strategies yourself. Ask your teen if he or she would help you with the exercises in that book. As you open up about your issues, hopes, and dreams, you may stimulate an interest in your teen. In the meantime, be sure you have a copy of this book around the house, and be perfectly open about reading it. Who knows what might develop next? You could possibly start a dialogue by asking your

teen to tell you what the three things are that you do that most annoy your teen. Then, see if you can do better. Communication is the most important bridge to your teenager's development. Keep building that bridge daily, in ways that your teenager likes!

This book might possibly be helpful if you're a teenager with no real problems. Jay McGraw uses himself as an example of the "average" teenager, trying to forget that he is an OK-looking, athletic son of a rich, famous guy who started the whole "Life Strategies" phenomenon in the first place. Jay's examples of problems (and subsequent triumphs) include when he was injured on the basketball court, felt sorry for himself for a while, and then worked hard at getting back into shape for the next basketball season; another "problem" was being nervous about asking his girlfriend to the prom. Sheesh, if these are your worst problems, do you even need a book like this? Let's talk about real problems many teenagers face: a variety of physical and emotional abuse, violence, health problems, poverty, coercive school and penal systems, and the reality of sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism that a rich, young, white, male, straight kid like Jay knows nothing about. Having these problems forced upon one is not the equivalent to making a bunch of "excuses" for not getting good grades or being popular or avoiding drugs. It was also hard to ignore the blatant sexist examples, such as the girl who is a "tease," while the similarly flirtatious boy goes unmentioned. (Why doesn't he just be honest about his double standard by calling her a "(...)" instead of the euphemism "tease"?) I have respect for Dr. Phil McGraw, partly because he seems to be a self-made person. But his older son is little more than an arrogant, spoiled, sheltered (...) who won't admit to riding his dad's coattails.

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