

REVIEW: DO HARD THINGS: a teenage rebellion against low expectations...by Melinda Villena

2008-06-01 15:06:25 by Steve Wright



Yesterday the wife of a guy in my graduating class reminded me that our 25th high school reunion is coming up later this year. (Ouch!) Right about the time of this event, my son will begin his freshman year at that very same high school. My Algebra II/Trig teacher is still at the school, now serving as Athletic Director. I know what you're thinking, and my kids have already asked, "How old is he?" I dare not speculate. At any rate, the fact that my reunion is converging with my oldest child's enrollment has sent me down memory lane. There are lessons I've learned that I would hope to teach my child, before he has to travel down the more difficult halls of my alma mater.

I'm always happy to stumble upon writings that articulate my thoughts, and recently, the Lord sent just that sort of gift in the form of a new book. My son has had supplemental reading assignments each quarter this year and one came due about the time we received a copy of Alex and Brett Harris' book, *Do Hard Things*, from a friend who is also the father of teenage kids. What perfect timing, I thought. This would be an ideal book for the assignment. I encouraged-okay, I STONGLY encouraged- our rising high school freshman to read this book and report on it. He did his job. And I'm doing mine.

Here is Mom's report:

Alex and Brett Harris are 19 year-old twin brothers who, just three years after beginning their website at www.therebelution.com, are among the most widely-read teen writers on the web. *Rebelution* comes from the combination of the words *rebellion* and *revolution* and means "a rebellion against low expectations," specifically, the low expectations that society has for teens. These guys are challenging their peers to raise the bar, to challenge themselves, to take risks, to "reclaim the teen years as the launching pad of life."

How many times have we sought to inspire our children with some version of "Just do your best"? The Harris brothers point out that this can actually be a trap and that "those who could do a lot better or tackle a much bigger challenge seldom do when they're already 'good enough' by other people's standards" and "pushing [themselves] to do more than is asked, expected or required is nearly always a lonely choice."

Throughout the book, the Harris brothers cite other young people's quotes, like this one from Wenslyn Reyes, an eighteen year old from the Philippines who is the youngest study group leader, pulpit translator and worship pianist in her church: "Do hard things means fighting for greater levels of excellence because there is always something harder to do. It is never a matter of arriving, it is a constant battle for growth."

In the appendix, there is a clear presentation of the gospel, the life-changing good news that transforms young and old, enabling us to do hard things. Some may come to know Christ through this easy-to-read but challenging-to-ponder-and-apply new book. Those who do are encouraged to reread parts of the book and to share the good news of the gospel with others.

Check out *Do Hard Things* and the blogspot at www.therebelution.com. Encourage your kids to log on with the many others who are being challenged to expect more of themselves than others expect of them.

Drug Proof Your Kids... by Melinda Villena

2008-06-26 13:06:17 by Steve Wright



DRUG PROOF YOUR KIDS is a facilitator-led program designed by [Focus on the Family](#) for parents and those who work with kids and families. The program stresses three key areas: **EDUCATION**, **PREVENTION**, and **INTERVENTION** and seeks to open up the important conversations between parent and child about alcohol and drugs, believing that it is never too early to focus on education and prevention, and never too late to intervene.

Following is an excerpt from *How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs*, by Stephen Arterburn and Jim Burns, (2007).

Emily is 14 years old. She's an above-average student, very pretty, well-liked by her peers, faithful in attending church, and comes from a stable, middle-class home. Everyone believes Emily has a lot going for her. But by the time she graduates from high school, the chances are:

80 percent - she will experiment with alcohol [1]

53 percent - she will try an illicit drug [2]

49 percent - she will have tried marijuana[3]

32 percent - she will get drunk at least once [4]

21 percent - she will smoke marijuana regularly [5]

9 percent - she will try cocaine or crack [6]

Those statistics ought to be sufficient to get the attention of anyone, especially parents!

In early 2006 I attended Drug Proof Your Kids facilitator training and met other parents, educators, law enforcement officers, youth pastors, counselors and others concerned about how to address the issue of alcohol and drug use among young people. At the close of training we were challenged to use what we learned, not only in our own homes and churches but in local schools, community groups, and other agencies and ministries who work with youth and families. I was privileged to meet three other Moms and we have become not only partners in this ministry but good friends. Each of these women has children who are college age or beyond, giving me the blessing of their wisdom and experience (my own children will begin 9th and 5th grades this Fall) in parenting. The relationships that they enjoy with their children, who are in their late teens or early twenties, are very encouraging to me.

Prior to the birth of my sons, I worked as a substance abuse counselor in downtown Chicago, Illinois. This was the late '80s to early '90s, and things have changed a great deal since then as far as trends in drug use, so I had a lot of catching up to do in order to be familiar with what is happening here in our area today.

Our team of four facilitators has gained even more insight as we have had the opportunity to do parent workshops at Church of the Apostle, Building Together Ministries, and Millenium Revival Center here in Raleigh. The workshops are designed for multiple sessions, but recognizing that it is often difficult for parents who are interested to commit to 4 or more meetings due to jobs or child care issues, we worked on trimming the program a bit so that we can present a fairly thorough overview of the material in two sessions. The parent workbooks that are provided to each participant are an invaluable tool, and Focus on the Family

provides information on additional resources to address specific needs of the participants and their families or community groups.

Probably one of my favorite parts of the workshops is listening and learning from the other parents and teachers/leaders. One of our ice breaker activities is a fill in the blank exercise, "One thing I've learned from parenting is....."

If you are interested in having Drug Proof Your Kids presented in the Raleigh area or if you have specific questions, please feel free to email melindavillena@bellsouth.net. Those outside the area can contact DPYK@family.org to learn of facilitators in your area. While Focus on the Family is a Christian organization, the curriculum is designed to be utilized in both church and secular settings.

Additional Resources:

[Drug Proof Your Kids website](#)

[Drug Proof Your Kids video](#)

[1] Maia Szalavitz, "Underage Drinking," *STATS at George Mason University*, http://www.alcoholnews.org/underage_drink.html, April 29, 2005.

[2] "Troubling Teen Drug Use Statistics," <http://www.teendrugabuse.us/teendrugstatistics.html>, October 9, 2006.

[3] "How Many Teens Use Marijuana?" *National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens*, http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/facts_mj1.asp, October 9, 2006.

[4] "Troubling Teen Drug Use Statistics." National Institute on Drug Abuse, "NIDA InfoFacts: Crack and Cocaine," <http://www.drugabuse.gov/InfoFacts/cocaine.html>, October 30, 2006.

[5] National Institute on Drug Abuse, "NIDA InfoFacts: Crack and Cocaine," <http://www.drugabuse.gov/InfoFacts/cocaine.html>, October 30, 2006.

[6] CASA, "*So Help Me God: Substance Abuse, Religion, Spirituality*," November 2001, <http://www.TheAntiDrug.com/Faith>, October 30, 2006
