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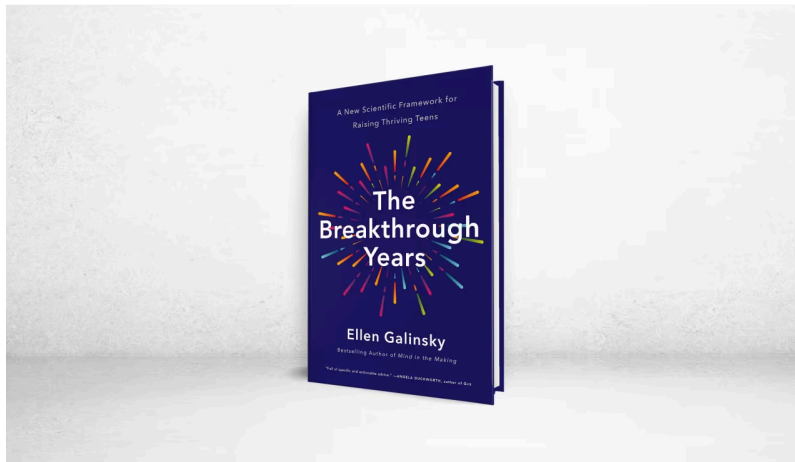
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'The Breakthrough Years' Review: The Truth About Teens

Adolescence has a reputation for being a time of turmoil, rebellion and difficulty. In fact, most teenagers report strong bonds with their parents.

By *Barbara Spindel*

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Ellen Galinsky's "The Breakthrough Years: A New Scientific Framework for Raising Thriving Teens" includes some welcome news for parents of adolescents. According to Ms. Galinsky's data, most teenagers say they get along well with their parents; not only that, they actually enjoy spending time with their moms and dads, too.

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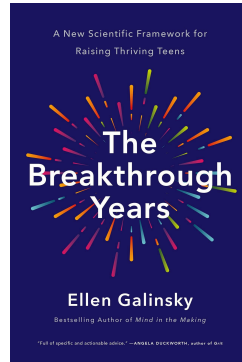
These findings fly in the face of the long-held understanding of adolescence as a time of turbulence

The Breakthrough Years: A New Scientific Framework for Raising Thriving Teens

By Ellen Galinsky

Flatiron Books

560 pages



and family strife. The author uses the latest brain science and her own intensive research to present a more nuanced and positive view. She calls adolescence “a time of enormous possibility,” and offers a wealth of guidance on how adults can best connect with and support teens. She’s particularly interested in helping teens develop the executive-

function skills that enable them to do things like manage emotions, focus and plan ahead.

The author asks young people what they want the adults of America to know about their age group, and explores the five most common responses. Among them: “understand our development,” “listen and talk *with* us, not *at* us” and “we are trying to understand ourselves and our needs.” Instead of saying to a teen who’s been rejected by a peer, for instance, that “it’s not the end of the world,” an adult might say, “I know you care a lot. That’s what being a teenager is all about. . . . Let’s talk about what you value in friends.”

Ms. Galinsky, a co-founder and the president of the nonprofit Families and Work Institute and the author of “Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs” (2010), counsels caregivers to provide structure while encouraging young people to solve their own problems. It’s easy to mock helicopter parents, but she suggests that there’s little danger of parents being overly involved when an adolescent’s autonomy and agency are respected.

One of the book’s five messages from teens to adults is “don’t stereotype us.” At the risk of stereotyping my fellow parents of teenagers, I’ll note that most of us are busy working or caring for aging relatives in addition to raising children. At nearly 500 pages, “The Breakthrough Years” might have a better chance of breaking through with parents if it weren’t quite so long.

Ms. Spindel’s book reviews appear in the Christian Science Monitor and elsewhere.