


How to increase maturity in youth

 screenagersmovie.com/tech-talk-tuesdays/how-to-increase-maturity-in-youth

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Some of the best moments as parents come from exposing our kids to the wonders of the world — starting from the warmth of human skin, to the soft cotton of a dry blanket, to the thrills of watching a garbage truck drive by, to the workings of a musical instrument, to the fun of a soccer ball. The list goes on. It is such an honor and privilege, and I fully believe our job, to introduce our children to all sorts of things, people, and experiences while they are growing up.

And before I delve into this TTT, I want to suggest showing your child (yourself or your classroom) something that will make them laugh while maturing their souls. It is one of my favorite films I ever made that few people have seen. It is 6 minutes and involves a funny partnership between my family and kids we had befriended while in India. You will see my 17-year old daughter, Tessa, back when she was just 10. Here it is TE.

My childhood was filled with many experiences where my parents brought me to places where I was the only kid in the crowd. I grew a lot from such experiences. My dad brought me to poetry readings, cafes to play chess with adults, and to the horse races. My mom loved international dance classes and, starting at 5 years old, I would sit on the sidelines while she danced. Pretty soon it was clear I was not a good sitter and started joining in. By age 6, I would perform alongside the adults in their little shows. I remember the pride I felt when I had a solo at a small restaurant. More importantly, having the warmth and support of all the women in the class week after week was a healing force in my very chaotic childhood.

My kids have also often been the only young people in an audience and they tell me how grateful they are for these exposures – even though at times I know they felt a bit self-conscious. Here is an example. Some years ago, Simon Sinek was coming to speak in Seattle about leadership and I took my teens. It was actually my son's birthday but he had seen Simon's [TED Talk](#) and wanted to go. During the Q & A, I asked Simon his views on how hours of video gaming could be impacting leadership skills in our youth. His answer was so fascinating that later I asked if he would be in the film I was working on (Screenagers) and he enthusiastically agreed to do so.

There are many other examples of places I have taken my kids where they were nearly the only youth in the audience—talks given by congresspeople, rallies, improv shows at small theaters, temples, churches, art shows, lectures about science, and the list goes on.

When we involve young people in more adult-focused activities, we are showing them that we value and respect their insights. We want to hear their reaction to important issues. We are also conveying that we know they have creative and leadership qualities and want to give them examples of ways they might employ such traits as adults. This is a quote I love from my father-in-law, Parker Small, and it is related to what I am talking about, "We don't mature in preparation for responsibility, we mature as a result of it."

My kids are not always excited to go, but with some compromises on my part—like promising they get to choose other things to do together that day or how we can leave early if need be—they generally agree. We certainly have had our duds, and then I sheepishly whisper that we can leave at intermission. But more often than not, we get something out of these experiences—in part because I do homework before presenting my suggestions. I search online for speakers' short videos to ensure they will be engaging.

With free time often equalling screen time (for both kids and adults), how do we ensure we take the time to expose our kids to real life people of different backgrounds, to people doing different careers, people creating art, and people working to improve the world?

How can we ensure all those in-person encounters actually happen?

1. Since it is still January—the New Year—now is a great time to put some activities on the calendar for the upcoming months to ensure they happen (and not get passed over by the convenience of yet another Netflix movie). Is there a dance performance or recital in your area? Is a speaker coming to town?

2. Talk with other parents to plan an event. My friend gets people to donate \$5 to \$10 a week, and they have a yoga teacher come to a house and lead some adults and teens through a class. Maybe have a few parents organize food making at someone's home with the kids—perhaps apple pie making, simple sushi, or wontons (something hands on is great fun and lots of conversations happen between the adults and kids). Or, plan to see a talk altogether.

3. Give kids a say in things. For example, you want to take them to a museum, but they moan and groan. Tell them that if they want to leave after 20 minutes, you will be perfectly fine with that decision—and if they want to stay that will be even better! Have you considered bringing them to a city council meeting? If you are bringing them to an art outing, share this little story: “When Facebook asked us to show Screenagers there, we visited their offices which are filled floor-to-ceiling with pieces of art. Facebook works with all sorts of artists because they know how key it is that their employees think outside of the box.”

For TTT this week, here are some ideas to discuss with our kids:

- What different worlds do they get exposed to on screens?
- Have they been to events, talks, etc. where there were very few other youth? How was that experience?
- What experiences might be good to commit to in the near future to learn more about people and the world?