

WINGS vs STRINGS: EMPOWERING YOUR TEEN TO THRIVE

Parenting for the Launch

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Take a guess what's the most common question I receive from teenagers. The quickest way to success? How to land that job? How to handle stress? Nope. It's how can I convince my parents to let me live my dream? Kaboom!

As parents, we all want to empower our children to be the best they can be: to build healthy relationships, to be successful in college and career, and to thrive as independents. (And even if we aren't parents, we probably feel this way about the young people in our lives, right?) **Part of empowering our children is to give them *wings* rather than *strings*.**

Wings are the things we do to prepare our children to be secure and confident people ready to make their mark. Wings allow them to soar. Strings, on the other hand, tie our children down and prevent them from achieving their full potential. It happens when we over manage them. Or, if we coddle, enable, or ignore them.

How do we release eagles to soar rather than kites we control?

One of the most important things for any parent to remember is that your child's success is not entirely reliant upon you! Lots of other factors are at play. However, the foundation you lay will have a lasting effect on your child and will impact his or her life choices and worldview. *And, your parenting style will impact their outcomes.*

With that, let's visit some real-world examples of how parents unintentionally give their children *strings*:

- *helicoptering* (hovering, reminding constantly, orchestrating their every plan, interfering, nagging)
- *performance-driven* (excessive pressuring of kids for their achievements and accomplishments; valuing performance above the person)
- *vicariousness* (living life through the child; glorying in his or her successes and agonizing in his/her defeats as if they are the parent's own)
- *enabling* (failing to enforce discipline or accountability, not letting him/her fail and face consequences)
- *overprotection* (being overly fearful of outside influences and perceived dangers; not allowing kids to experience enough of the real world to make informed choices; not permitting them to make their own decisions)

In contrast, we empower our kids when we train them with strong internal guiding principles and give them freedom, opportunity, and accountability according to their desires and maturity. Here are some examples of giving our children *wings*:

- *healthy separation* (understanding that teens are their own persons separate from their parents)
- *trust and grace* (giving them incremental freedom *as it is earned* through demonstrating responsibility and integrity; extending forgiveness and taking steps to re-establish trust when it is broken)
- *equipping* (strategically training them to handle real world responsibilities and situations)
- *empowering* (letting them experience new/different kinds of people and challenging situations with trust and guidance; appreciating their unique design and interests and encouraging them accordingly; having them make their own decisions and supporting them through the consequences)

Ultimately, raising young adults is not about us and our identity, interests, or agenda. It's about doing what's best for our kids—guiding them to fulfill their dreams and purpose. Empowering them to live confidently and independently, with integrity and impact. When we give our children wings, we give them one of the greatest gifts of all—our unwavering belief in them. It's huge!