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*Boundaries With Teens* by Dr. John Townsend is an easy read that deals with the big question of "When to say yes, How to say no". Parents face many different issues and struggles in their efforts to parent their teens effectively. Dr. Townsend has come up with a list of typical adolescent behaviors:

- ✓ Has a disrespectful attitude toward parents, family and others
- ✓ challenges requests or rules
- ✓ is self-absorbed and unable to see things from anyone else's perspective
- ✓ has a negative attitude toward life, school, or people
- ✓ is emotionally withdrawn and distant from you
- ✓ lacks motivation for school and fails to maintain grades
- ✓ neglects home chores and responsibilities
- ✓ has mood shifts that seem to have neither rhyme nor reason
- ✓ is mean to siblings or friends
- ✓ detaches from family events and want to be with friends only
- ✓ lies and is deceptive about activities
- ✓ abuses substances—alcohol, drugs, pornography, and so on.

This list could go on, of course. It is no wonder that when faced with one of several of these problems, many parents become discouraged, overwhelmed, or confused about what to do. You don't have to be one of them. If you read this book because your teen exhibits any of the above behaviors, be encouraged. These problems have solutions. You don't have to resign yourself to simply coping and surviving for the next few years. You can take some steps that can make major differences in the troublesome attitudes and behavior of your adolescent.

This book sets out a list of principles and techniques to help parents make positive changes in the lives of their teens.

Dr Townsend starts with the topic "Teens Need Boundaries". The problems listed earlier all have a common foundation: *the battle between the teen's desire for total freedom and the parents' desire for total control*. All teens want the freedom to do what they want when they want. They need to learn that freedom is earned and that they can gain freedom by demonstrating responsibility. Adolescence is the time in life when kids are supposed to learn this lesson. Parents need to help teens learn responsibility and self-control so that they use freedom appropriately and live well in the real world. To do this, parents need to help their teens learn boundaries.

Is it too late? Many parents of teens, aware that they are in the last stage of parenting, wonder if there is still time to help their kids learn responsibility and self-control. "Maybe I should just hang on and try to get through it," they say. This is often a sign of weariness and giving up prematurely. "In most cases, however, I would say that *healthy boundaries can make a significant difference*," says Dr Townsend. As a parent, don't give up. At this stage in life, your teen needs an involved parent who has good boundaries.

Teens need to develop good boundaries in order to make it successfully through this season of life. Healthy boundaries give them the structure, self-control, and sense of ownership they need to figure out all their "who am I?" questions and to deal with the physiological and developmental changes they are experiencing.

Boundaries function somewhat like the trunk of a tree. The trunk holds the leaves, fruit, and roots together. However, all trees with strong trunks started out as weak saplings. They needed to be tied to a stake because they couldn't yet handle their own weight. They needed to lean on and be supported by something outside themselves. Then, in time, the trees matured and took over that job for themselves. The process of developing boundaries is similar. Teens can't create their own "trunks." They don't have the necessary tools to become responsible, thoughtful, and empathetic with others. Like a tree sapling, they need help from outside themselves. Parents are the stake for their teens. When parents tell teens the truth, set limits, establish curfews, confront misbehavior, and do a host of other things, they are providing a structure and helping teens to develop a structure. If all goes well, teens will ultimately be able to meet the demands of adult life and responsibility.

And this is the purpose of this book, to show you how to help your adolescent shoulder responsibility for her actions, attitudes, and speech so that she leans the gift of self-control and ownership over her own actions. The whole process starts with you, the parent. So in this book you will learn the deceptively simple skill that all parents of teens need: knowing *when to say Yes, and how to say no.*