

# The Books I Wish I'd Read Before My Child Hit Middle School!

Below is a list of some of the very best books to help you understand and better parent your child - whether a middle schooler, high schooler or young adult. If they're still in elementary school or even younger - all the better! Some of them are written more for parents of younger children but will provide significant insight about how the brain works and how we, as parents, can channel this knowledge and help our children (no matter their age) thrive throughout life. Let me know if you've ready any I should add to the list!

**Books added in 2023 have '23 beside the author's name.**

## ***Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More Than IQ (Goleman)***

If you are really interested in starting with the end in mind, then start with this seminal book on emotional intelligence. This is the book that started conversations about "EQ" from classrooms to boardrooms. It will help you understand where we want our kids to end up (sooner rather than later) and where we need to be so we can help them. The parenting books will make much more sense if you learn about emotional intelligence first.

## ***Emotional Agility (David)***

Where Goleman's book, above, is more explanatory and illustrative of emotional intelligence, David's book is more of a "self-help" or "how to" book. Start with Goleman and move on to David.

## ***Mindfulness (Williams and Penman)***

During my research on emotional intelligence, adolescence and parenting, one thing became increasingly clear; mindfulness is the key to emotional awareness and regulation (two fundamental components of emotional intelligence). A few years ago I would have rolled my eyes at the very thought of "focusing on my breath" or "being in the moment", but it is scientifically proven (many times over) to help with almost every area of mental health. If you don't read this book, read about and practice mindfulness in some form - your kids will thank you!

## ***Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence (Steinberg)***

This book is written by Laurence Steinburg, a renowned expert in adolescence. He spends some time on public policy, societal changes, the law, etc. but also does a great job of explaining the changes in the adolescent brain. Very eye-opening.

## ***Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain (Blakemore)***

This book compliments Steinburg's above does an excellent job of providing the science in a totally relatable way by describing scientific studies in layman's terms.

***The Teenage Brain (Jensen)***

Quite heavy on neuroscience, but if you're truly interested in the adolescent brain and what's going on with your child, it's a must-read. She does a great job of blending in anecdotes from real life to explain how the adolescent brain works.

***The Whole Brain Child (Siegel and Bryson)***

While none of the Siegel and Bryson books specifically focus on adolescents, they are essential reading for a) understanding a child's brain in general and b) how parents should communicate with kids. However, I feel he gets much too far in the weeds regarding left brain right brain that can leave many with false impression that some related myths (and "brain training methods") are true. Just keep in mind, all he's describing in the beginning of the book is how children become emotionally intelligent (in short, learning to be aware of and eventually regulate their own emotions).

***No Drama Discipline (Siegel and Bryson)***

Another great book that incorporates a lot of *The Whole Brain Child* but, as the title indicates, goes much more into how to communicate with and discipline kids (spoiler-discipline does not mean "punish"). And although the book is geared towards young children, the same principals can be applied to teens and tweens.

***The Power of Showing Up (Siegel and Bryson)***

If you only read one of the 3 of the Siegel and Bryson books listed here, this should probably be it (there's another published right before this one that I don't mention, called *The Yes Brain*). This book does a good job of summarizing the other 3 in a little less detail.

***Parenting a Teen Who has Intense Emotions: DBT Skills to Help Your Teen Navigate Emotional and Behavioral Challenges* (Harvey and Rathbone)**

Because I have a child with "intense emotions", I especially appreciate that the authors go into a bit more detail about this specific issue. It's very simple to read and gets to the heart of parenting skills that work with *all* adolescents. If your child is ADHD, "stubborn", "strong-willed", or has intense negative emotions, which come through behaviorally, this book will give you tremendous comfort, insight and actual advice!

***Parenting the New Teen in the Age of Anxiety: A Complete Guide to Your Child's Stressed, Depressed, Expanded, Amazing Adolescence* (Duffy)**

The opening of this book really resonated with me and the author continued to deliver. This is truly a must read for everyone with a child anywhere near adolescence. You'll learn more about the risks our kids face regularly, the pressure they are under, and the litany new issues they deal with that we did not. Get this book.

***Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child (Gottman)***

A truly eye-opening book that will convince you of the importance of emotion in our parenting and communication with our children. It will make you stop and reflect on your parenting style and where it developed and cause you to change your patterns, if necessary.

***Positive Discipline for Teenagers (Nelson and Lott)***

All the parenting books on this list advocate "kind and firm" parenting or "authoritative" parenting (as opposed to authoritarian, permissive, etc.). This book is not organized as one would normally see but the information is invaluable and geared specifically for teens.

***How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk (Faber & Mazlish)***

This book is a classic, first published in 1980 and also based on "kind and firm" parenting. However, you'll find plenty of additional helpful nuggets in each of the books on this list. They also wrote a *Teens* book but I really don't believe it offers more than the original.

***Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls (Damour)*** and***Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood (Damour)***

Both of these books are 2 of the most highly recommended books on raising girls (and the only 2 on this list still on my desk waiting on me to read). If you have girls, my suggestion is to order these ASAP.

***Queen Bees and Wannabees (Wiseman) '23***

A must-read for understanding the social movements of teens and tweens. This is the classic that inspired the movie "Mean Girls" but it's so much more. Wiseman worked with young people for years and knows them so well.

***The Addiction Inoculation (Lahey) '23***

This book explains so much of the science behind why it's so easy for teens to become addicted in the first place. Lahey also helps us understand the risk and protective factors for addiction and how to parent to prevent it from happening.

***What Do You Say? (Stixrud and Johnson) '23***

I found this to be a very common sense and down-to-earth book for parents of teens. They cover the basics for communication, connection, motivation and at the end of each chapter they give sample conversations and give you something to help you remember the concept.

***Getting to Calm (Kastner and Wyatt) '23***

Another overall good book for parenting teens with lots of practical advice and behaviors explained. They also give great examples from other families and how they've handled situations. Clearly lays out issues that happen in almost every family, and how to handle them.

***You're Ruining My Life (Kolari) '23***

Although this is not a really easy book to find, I thought it was excellent. Kolari is a long-time adolescent therapist who gives great advice "from the trenches", especially about communication. Lots of great tidbits in this book.

***Sex, Teens and Everything in Between (Zaloom) '23***

Every parent of a 2nd grader should be required to read this book! You need to know this stuff BEFORE you actually need it! Everything from consent to porn and legal consequences of sexual harassment and assault. Very helpful for talking to your kids.

***Mindful Parenting for ADHD (Bertin) '23***

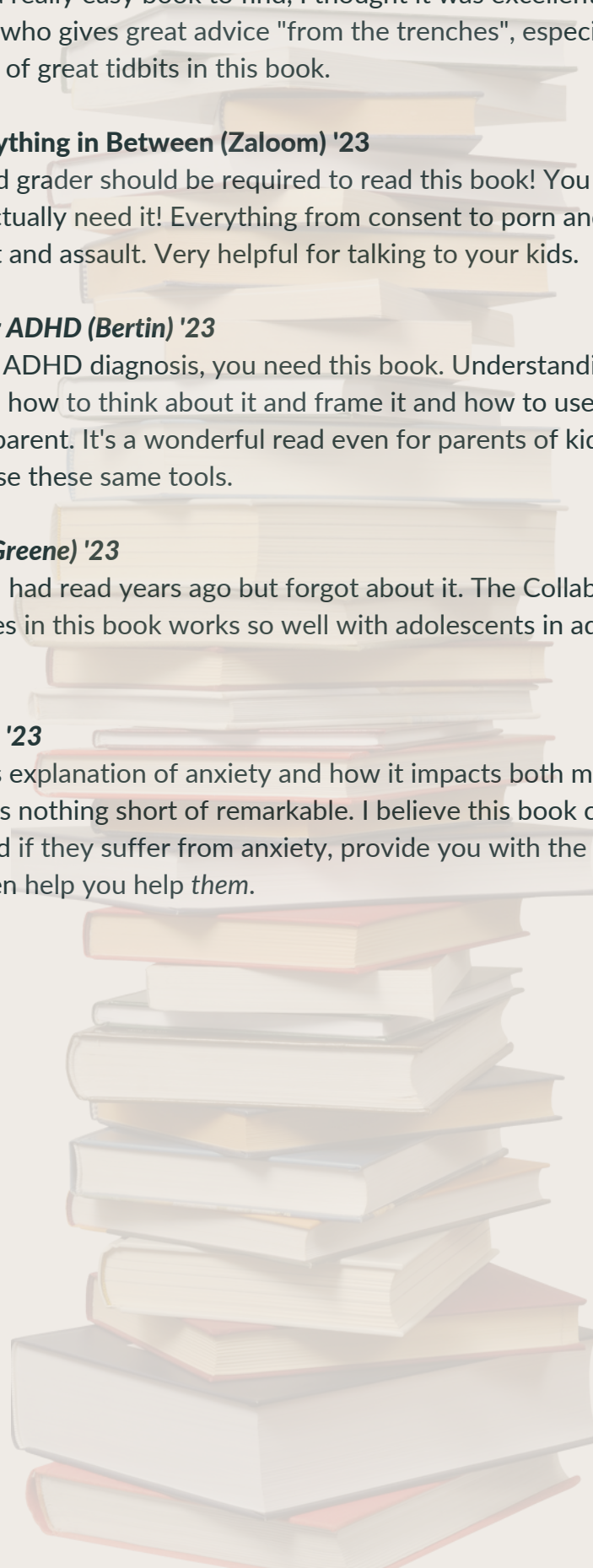
If your child has an ADHD diagnosis, you need this book. Understanding the nuances of your teen's behavior, how to think about it and frame it and how to use mindfulness to be a better, less reactive parent. It's a wonderful read even for parents of kids without ADHD because we can all use these same tools.

***The Explosive Child (Greene) '23***

Another classic that I had read years ago but forgot about it. The Collaborative and Proactive Solutions he describes in this book works so well with adolescents in addition to younger kids.

***Anxiety Rx (Kennedy) '23***

Dr. Russel Kennedy's explanation of anxiety and how it impacts both mind and body and what to do about it, is nothing short of remarkable. I believe this book could help you better understand your child if they suffer from anxiety, provide you with the needed empathy for the disorder, and even help you help *them*.





I'm the founder of neurogility and I've already been where you are now. As a matter of fact, my husband and I went through a few really tumultuous years with our son. We're intelligent, well-meaning, loving parents and we did everything we thought best, and still fell short. Looking back, it's hard to believe how much we didn't know. and how many mistakes we made.

By the time our son was in middle school I thought I'd read all the parenting books I'd ever need - all of them focusing on strong-willed kids and behavioral modification tools. I knew adolescence was not going to be easy, but I really thought we could handle it. The problem is, you don't know what you don't know and as it turned out, we were completely unprepared.

At the point we realized we were in trouble, I was in full panic mode and making things worse for everyone. Our son was also diagnosed with anxiety and depression (on top of ADHD and dyslexia), which impacted every single aspect of his behavior and all of our lives. But when we finally got the right help things began to turn around. When our family counselor suggested I read No Drama Discipline (on the list), a whole new world of opened up to me (even though the book is for parents of toddlers!) and completely changed our family's life. That's when I decided to help other families learn what we didn't know and avoid the issues we'd had.

I've recruited my husband to this effort and we'll soon be offering neurogility's inaugural online course for parents. It will have been at least 4 years in the making and I promise it will deliver. If you'd like to be on the waitlist for the course just go [here](#) and give me your name and email and you'll also receive a weekly email reminder for our podcast, Speaking of Teens (available on all podcast platforms and [here](#)).

And if you'd rather "skip to the good stuff" than read a full library of books, simply go [here](#) and download each of my free parenting e-books and guides!

If you ever need to talk or have any questions, you can reach me at [acoleman@neurogility.com](mailto:acoleman@neurogility.com).

*Ann Coleman*