

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

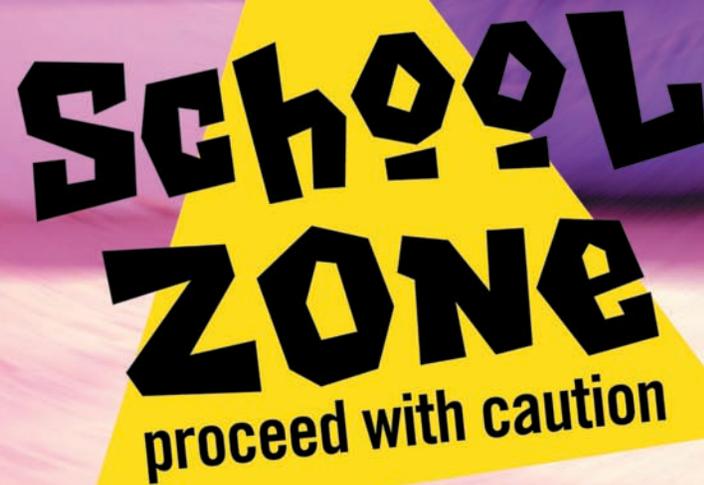
Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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HOW TO DO
SCHOOL,
SO IT WON'T
DO YOU



**SCHOOL
ZONE**
proceed with caution



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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SCHOOL ZONE

proceed with caution

At the very back of this booklet you will find a section with some wonderful, practical suggestions for “doing” school from Dr. Rick Fowler. We are indebted to him for making a huge contribution in an area where we are not qualified. We believe that if the information Dr. Fowler has shared is taken and applied that any student can be helped tremendously.

Our part of the booklet is not intended to be academic in nature. It is simply meant to be a bit of encouragement for struggling teens and those who love them. We would like to share in just a few short pages a bit of hope for both.

Hope For Struggling Students...

Do you know that the best students around are not the smartest, they’re the FAT-est! These are the kids who have been mature and courageous enough to:

- F** ...Face the truth about their situation and take responsibility for it
- A** ...Admit that they need help and accept help
- T** ...Teachable spirits and do whatever it takes to change

So, are you willing to get FAT? If so, then we want to talk to you about two things that we believe will help you be a better student and all God wants you to be in this life.

The first thing is... **Attitude**

Henry Ford once said, “If you think you can do well in school, you’re right. If you don’t think you can do well in school, you’re still right.” Most of the time whether we “do”

school or don’t “do” school is not a matter of brains, it is a matter of attitude.

Bill Hybels tells the story of two prisoners in one small cell with no light except what came through a tiny window three feet above eye level. Both prisoners spent a great deal of time looking at that window. One of them saw the bars — obvious, ugly, metallic reminders of reality.

From day to day he grew increasingly discouraged, bitter, angry and hopeless. By contrast, the other prisoner looked through the window to the stars beyond. Hope welled up in that prisoner as he began to think of the possibility of starting a new life in freedom. The prisoners were looking at the same window, but one saw bars while the other saw stars.

What made the difference in their lives? One word: Attitude. This is such an important lesson for all of us, because not only did their attitude impact the quality of their present, but it greatly impacted the quality of their future as well. Two men imprisoned behind the same bars, but for one hope made the days more pleasant and the time past more quickly.

Most of the time whether we “do” school or don’t “do” school is not a matter of brains, it is a matter of attitude.

Positive thinking is how you think about a problem.

Enthusiasm is how you feel about a problem.

For the other, bitterness made him miserable and each minute like an hour. When finally the day of release arrived, one man left to face his future with excitement and expectation, while the other man took into his future only anger and hopelessness.

Life is a series of problems, challenges, trials and disappointments, and in school, as in any other part of life, attitude is everything. Whether you can or can't, whether you do or don't, whether you overcome life's problems, challenges, trials, and disappointments or whether they overcome you, is determined by your attitude. The most important question you can answer is this: What is your attitude of choice? It's not what your critics say that matters, it is what you choose to believe. Dr. John Maxwell tells the story of Roger Bannister to show how important our attitudes are to our success:

"Remember the four-minute mile? People had been trying to achieve it since the days of the

ancient Greeks. In fact, folklore has it that the Greeks had lions chase the runners, thinking that would make them run faster. They also tried drinking tiger's milk. Nothing they tried worked. So they decided it was impossible for a person to run a mile in four minutes or less. And for over a thousand years everyone believed it. Our bone structure is all wrong. Wind resistance is too great. We have inadequate lung power. There were a million reasons.

Then one man, one single human being, proves that the doctors, the trainers, the athletes, and the millions of runners before him who tried and failed, were all wrong. And, miracle, of miracles, the year after Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile, thirty-seven other runners broke the four-minute mile. The year after that three hundred runners broke the four-minute mile. And a few years ago in a single race in New York, thirteen out of thirteen runners broke the four-minute mile. In other words, a few decades ago the runner who finished dead last in the New York race would have been regarded as having accomplished the impossible. What happened? There were no great breakthroughs in training. No one discovered how to control wind resistance. Human bone structure and physiology didn't suddenly improve. But human attitude did... until Roger Bannister came along, we all believed the experts."

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale says, "Positive thinking is how you think about a problem. Enthusiasm is how you feel about a problem.

The two together determine what you do about a problem. If I could do anything for a person I would not change their problems, I would change their attitudes." Positive attitudes will not always change our circumstances, but they will always change us.

Van Crouch relates the story of Chris Burke. At age five Chris had a two-line part in a school play. Thrilled at the applause he received, he announced upon returning home that he wanted to be an actor when he grew up. His mother explained to him that acting was a difficult job. And she knew that few parts existed for someone like Chris, who has Down's Syndrome. At his birth, Chris' mother had been told that her son would never learn to walk or talk, much less lead a satisfying life. She was advised to put him in an institution, but she refused to give up on her son. She walked with him, talked to him, and read to him. As a preschooler Chris could both walk and talk and was keenly interested in other people and sensitive to their needs. He could sing television commercials and imitate Sesame Street characters.

As a young teen, Chris looked at a UPS truck and said, "I have Up Syndrome, because I feel happy and excited about my life." It was that attitude that led Chris Burke to be cast in the part of Corky in the very successful television series, *Life Goes On*. Chris Burke understood that he could not change his circumstances, but he could change the outcome of his life with a positive, enthusiastic attitude.

Change your attitudes and you change your world.

There are three things you can do each day to help improve your attitudes:

1. Measure your progress with attitude checks.

Once you have decided what right thoughts, feelings and behaviors look like in your life, you will need to review these every day. Measure where you are each day against where you should be, to make sure you aren't slipping back into the "problem" zone.

2. Find someone to whom you can be accountable for your attitudes.

You will need a person in your life who cares about you and has your best interest at heart. Someone who will encourage you when your attitudes are right, and confront you when your attitudes are wrong.

3. Associate only with people who have right attitudes.

No matter how much you want to change your negative attitudes into positive ones, it will be almost impossible for you to do if you are constantly with negative people.



Whether you “do” school, or whether school “does” you is more about what is in your heart than what is in your head.

The main thing is not to give up. It takes time to change your attitudes completely, but it can be done. Dr. Paul Meier says, “Attitudes are nothing more than habits of thought, and habits can be acquired. An action repeated becomes an attitude realized.” So, what is your attitude of choice? Whether you “do” school, or whether school “does” you, is more about what is in your heart than what is in your head.

Still willing to be FAT? O.K. then, let’s talk about...

Motivation

If we were to ask most people what they believe the one common characteristic people who succeed in life have, most would say self-discipline. Discipline is something we all struggle with, yet know little about. As is the case with so many other things in our lives, when it comes to discipline the problem is not really the problem. Most of the time we think we have a discipline problem, but in reality we have a motivation problem. You see when you are motivated to do something, discipline is not a problem. When you aren’t motivated, discipline is a huge problem. So, if motivation is so important to reaching our goals, where does motivation come from? How do you get motivated and stay motivated?

Imagine for a moment that you live in Maine. Maine is a great state, but you hate cold weather. More than anything you have always wanted to live in Southern California. You have seen pictures of the beautiful beaches and heard about the balmy, winter time temperatures.

So, you decide to pack up all your belongings, load your car and move to Southern California. Now, the only thing you hate as much as cold weather is extended driving. It is more than 2,000 miles from Maine to California. Do you let your dislike of long automobile trips stop you from moving? No, of course not. Well, then why not?

- Because your dissatisfaction with the climate where you live is greater than your dislike of driving.
- Because you realize that the discomfort of the long trip is temporary, but the comfort of living in the warmer climate will be permanent.
- Because you have a very real destination in mind. You have a goal and a plan, so you are motivated to do whatever it takes to reach that goal. When the road gets long and you get weary, all you have to do is think about where you’re headed and how great it will be when you arrive there.

The secret to getting and staying motivated in every area of your life is having goals. Your goals need to be specific and detailed. The clearer and more defined your goals, the easier it will be to stay motivated. You must have a “destination” in mind for every area of your life. You have to know exactly where you want to go, and exactly how you are going to get there. Setting and achieving your goals in life is really just learning the art of delayed gratification. Scott Peck in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, said, “Delaying gratification is a

process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with.” What does that mean?

Delayed gratification simply put means that I’m willing to get the things I don’t enjoy out of the way first, in order to be able to enjoy even more, the things I do like. When you make a decision to set goals for yourself, that is essentially what you are choosing to do. It is like going to a catalog and choosing a high profile stereo system that you want very badly. Owning that stereo then becomes your goal, and your motivation for doing whatever it takes to reach that goal or destination. Next you map out a plan to get where you are going. For example:

The first leg of your journey toward stereo ownership is determining how much money you will need. You decide \$500.

The next stage of the process is deciding how many hours after school and on weekends you will have to work to make that much money. You determine 100 hours or about 10 weeks.

The next part of the trip is going to work every day so you can earn that much money in that length of time.

Obviously, the going to work everyday part is the hardest. But because you have a goal in mind you are motivated to keep going. Each time you are tired, or get bored with the job, or sick of your boss, you think about that stereo, you imagine yourself listening to all

that great music, and you keep going to work. That is delayed gratification. You are doing the part you don’t like first, in order to have the good part later.

Now here is another important part of this process. When you decide ahead of time what are your goals, and you outline a detailed plan for reaching those goals, then all the decisions are made ahead of time, and the only thing left to do is to work the plan. This will keep you from having a wrestling match with yourself every day about whether or not you should go to work. Your body and your emotions will sometimes fight you. They’ll say things like, “you can’t go to work, you’re too tired,” or “you can’t work today, you have too much to do.”

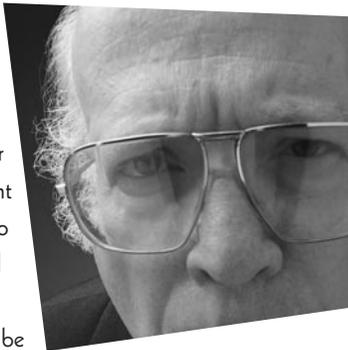
But if you have first set your goals and these goals are things you really want in life, and secondly put your goals and your plan in writing ahead of time, then you don’t even have to think about it. It isn’t up for debate. The plan is to go to work every day and the decision has already been made. The goals that you choose in life are going to reveal a lot about your commitment, what is really important to you, and where your heart lies. Your goals are going to reveal the real “you” to the world. They will also set the direction for your life, so be careful that your goals are taking you closer to what God wants you to be and not further away.

Don't fall into the TRAP

of holding others or your circumstances responsible for what is wrong in your life.

Remember the cross-country trip from Maine to California? Yes, it is true that keeping California on your mind will provide you with long term motivation. But, what about the everyday encouragement you need along the way? You need to know how to break your long trip down into short trips in order to help keep you motivated daily. There are a lot of great places to see and enjoy between Maine and California. Planning to reach one of these intermediate stops each day will help make your long trip more enjoyable.

By the same token, knowing how to break your long-term goals down into shorter term goals will help you stay motivated for the long haul. It is important to know where you want to be five years from now and have a plan in place to get there. But that plan has to be broken down into months and weeks and days. It is easier to think about what it will take to reach your goal for this day, or this week, than to be overwhelmed thinking about all you will have to do for the next five years. Each time you reach one of these short term goals, allow yourself to enjoy that accomplishment. Of course, you will need to keep reminding yourself of how good it will be to reach your long-term destination, but also take time to look back and feel good about how far you have come.



Before you begin to set goals, you will need to get a vision for your life. You do that by beginning to see yourself the way God sees you. That vision will help you formulate your goals and be the measuring stick by which you evaluate everything that you do. Perhaps right now you feel like this is all a waste of time. You believe that things will never be any different in your life because of your background, your parents, your financial status, or what you see as your limitations.

You need to be very careful that you don't fall into the trap of holding others or your circumstances responsible for what is wrong in your life. As soon as you do that, you render yourself powerless to change. When you don't assume full responsibility for your own life you are labeling yourself as a victim. Once you wear that label you also become a victim of hopelessness and helplessness. You cannot make the rest of the world responsible for your happiness or success.

The day that you take full responsibility for yourself is the day you can begin to focus your time and energy on fulfilling your dreams. If you will focus on what you can control, then your success will always be in your own hands. When you focus on things out of your control, then you begin to feel frustrated, helpless, hopeless and angry. Don't be afraid to trust God and to move ahead in his strength. That is where you start.

There are three kinds of people in this world today:

1. **The Group in the Stands.** The spectators. Just like the ones at the Super Bowl. They like football, but they aren't part of the team. They may wear the team colors occasionally, but they never wear the uniform. They may cheer those on the field or they may criticize those who are actually in the game, but they put forth no effort, they take no risks, and they never sweat or get dirty. They have made no investment of themselves to the success of the game.
2. **The Group on the Sidelines.** They are a little closer to the action. They do wear the uniform and they learn the plays. They go to all the practices, but have never really gotten into the game.
3. **The Group on the Field.** These are the ones who are paying the price. They are working the plan. They are the ones taking the risks and investing all they have to make things happen, to make a difference in the game. They are willing to get out of the huddle and step up to the line.

It would be foolish for a person sitting in the stands who hasn't prepared himself physically or mentally to think he could put down his hot dog or finish his nachos, run out onto the field and get into the game. First, he would make no worthwhile contribution to the success of the team. Secondly, he'd probably get killed!

If you are really serious about being different and becoming all God wants you to be then you must be willing to get into the game, to prepare yourself, to study, and to pay the price every day. Former American President, Theodore Roosevelt once said, "The credit in life does not go to the critic who stands on the sideline and points out where the strong stumble, but rather, the real credit in life goes to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face may get marred by sweat and dust, who knows great enthusiasm and great devotion and learns to spend himself in a worthy cause, who, at best if he wins, knows the thrill of high achievement and if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that in life his place will never be with those very cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

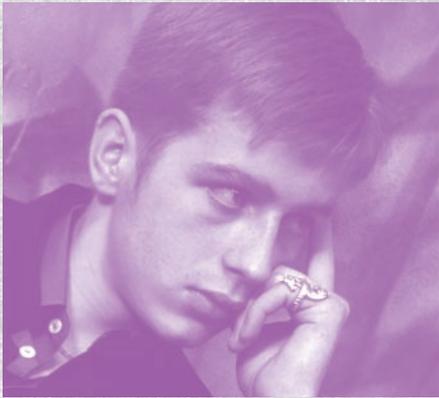
People who get in the game are those who are always:

- ATTEMPTING
- ADVANCING
- ACHIEVING

Sometimes the achievements may seem small because the advancements are being made in inches instead of yards, but they never quit attempting to move ahead. There will always be those who will try to discourage you from attempting, advancing and achieving. Those who will tell you that it is impossible and hopeless. Those who will laugh and ridicule and say you are foolish to think you can be different.

It's like being at the free-throw line in the last five seconds of the big championship and you are a team of one. If you make the shot, you win the game. If you miss the shot, you lose. It is an away game, so everyone in the stands is for the home team and screaming at you to miss. The other team is trying to distract and intimidate you. It seems like no one there wants you to make the hoop.

Now imagine that the hoop has a sign over it that says success. You are desperately trying to make the goal, but most of the world is screaming at you to miss. It isn't easy, but if you face the fact that this world is not your friend and prepare yourself ahead of time for the opposition, then the pressure will only make you stronger and more determined to win.



You may realize when you finish this booklet that you do want to be FAT and become all God wants you to be, but you may feel overwhelmed by all of the information that has been set before you at once. Don't allow that to happen, because it will make you want to give up before you even get started. Remember, having it all doesn't mean having it all at once. Becoming all we were created to be has to be built piece by piece, thought by thought, choice by choice, day by day. Take one thing at a time and concentrate on today. Tomorrow will then take care of itself. You can do it!

Hope For Perplexed Parents...

School is probably the biggest source of frustration in some parent/teen relationships. For many teenagers school is a low priority, boring, necessary evil. Some kids "do" school. Some do not. "Doing" school means that the student meets the teacher's expectations and as a result gets good grades. "Doing" school means that they follow the rules well enough to stay out of trouble. But "doing" school also means that the school is offering a program that is effective, given the learning style of the student. Learning styles affect which students "do" school and which ones don't. Schools will roll out the welcome mat for an organized, right-brained, logical student who loves being there. But, for the left-brained daydreamer who is equally intelligent, it is another story entirely.

You have probably heard it said, "The problem is not always the problem." There are many reasons that kids don't achieve in school. Some go to school every day, not ready to learn because of the emotional issues with which they are dealing. They may have parents that are divorcing, there may be constant upheaval and conflict in the home, financial problems, abuse or neglect of some kind. The teen may be dealing with anger, fear, anxiety, depression, feelings of inadequacy, or even suicidal thoughts. Any of these can keep even a bright student from being able to focus. Let's look at the two most common reasons for not "doing" school:

1. Poor Self-Esteem

Teenagers get their sense of self-esteem from those around them. It usually isn't what they think of themselves that matters, and it isn't

even what others think of them that matters, it's what they THINK others THINK of them that matters. Teenagers, even the ones that appear to be successful, spend most of their time playing the comparison game. Everywhere they look it seems that there are people who are smarter, funnier, more coordinated, better looking, taller, shorter, heavier, thinner, more talented... and they (just like we) tend to compare themselves to those who have more of what they want and not less. So as a result, they almost always lose the comparison game. The result is a very distorted self-image.

Self-image is simply what they think and feel about themselves. A poor self-image will affect every area of their lives because what they think and feel about themselves AFFECTS how they respond to life, and how they respond to life AFFECTS all their relationships, and their relationships AFFECT how others respond to them, and how others respond to them AFFECTS how they think and feel about themselves.

The cycle is a vicious one: You don't like yourself, so you respond to life negatively. A negative outlook on life always affects your relationships. No one likes a person who is negative, angry or complaining, so this affects how other people view and respond to them, and they end up feeling even worse about themselves.

Teenagers get
their sense of
self-esteem
from those
around them.

We each have a belief system. That belief system determines what we think about. What we think about determines how we feel. How we feel determines how we act and the choices we make. Simply, our actions are belated announcements of our belief system. The way a kid acts and the choices he makes will give you a clear picture of how he really feels about himself.

In order to help your student you must be able to “read” their actions — to see these actions as ways that they cope with self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy. Dr. James Dobson gives us the five most common coping behaviors that adolescents use:

“I’ll Fight.” When feelings of inferiority and worthlessness get overwhelming they will cause a person to strike out. The hostility is simply turned outward and will be directed toward anyone who gets in their way. While difficult to deal with, at least the troublemaker still has enough hope left to fight. The dramatic increase of violent crimes in this country committed by adolescents is frightening. One of the reasons for this increase is that there are adults in each of the lives of these adolescents who have chosen to ignore the real issue. These kids are not fighting against society. They’re fighting against giving in to hopelessness and despair.

“I’ll Withdraw.” When the hostility caused by feelings of inferiority and worthlessness is turned inward, the “withdrawer” makes the decision to surrender, completely and totally

because he concludes, “There is no hope for me. I AM inferior. Therefore I will take no chances or assume any more unnecessary emotional risks.” Fighters may upset you, but you should be more concerned about the adolescent who has given up on life and on himself than the one who is a troublemaker. Withdrawing is a sign of hopelessness. The person who has withdrawn is the one in the most pain.

“I’ll Be a Clown.” The clown refuses to let others get too close for fear of being hurt or rejected, or because he is afraid people will see his woundedness. Making a joke of everything and refusing to be serious is another way of controlling situations and conversations that might expose the pain in his life. The clown, the fighter, and the withdrawer all have one thing in common — major feelings of inferiority.

“I’ll Deny Reality.” This is the primary reason that drug and alcohol abuse are on the rise. Every 24 hours in this country 1,000 teenagers start using alcohol and 500 begin using drugs. In 1997 drug use by young people ages 12 to 17 years old increased 2.4 percent over the previous year. The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reported that in this age group 11.4 percent said that they had used some illicit drug within the past month. 171,000 teenagers used heroin for the first time in 1996, up from the 117,000 who tried it in 1995. Mental illness among teens is also climbing dramatically. They can’t handle the pain of inferiority any longer, so

they either try to dull the pain any way they can, or they just mentally check out.

“I’ll Conform.” This is the social doormats — afraid to express his own opinion if it goes against the crowd. This person will go along with ideas he disagrees with, and embrace things that he deep-down dislikes just to feel accepted. This is why kids are turning to gangs in record numbers. There are hundreds of thousands of kids today who really believe that they have no purpose in this world, and they are searching for a place where they can find meaning in life. Gangs offer them the three things that they are looking for: the promise of security, respect and a sense of belonging. (Isn’t it great that they can find these things in Christ!) Peer pressure is always the most powerful and the most dangerous when a child has no sense of his own worth and value.

Too many times parents react to the symptoms and not the disease. Don’t be sidetracked or put off by bad behavior or what may appear to be a bad attitude — these are not the problem. The real problem is a lack of self-worth. Thank God we have the answer to this problem, but we must first love them as they are and where they are.

Unfortunately, we live in a world that values beauty, brains, bucks and brawn. This is a cruel and unfair system, but despite the injustice, it is the one in which these kids must compete.

In order to help your student you must be able to “read” their actions

They will not change the system, so they need allies in their fight for survival. We cannot turn a deaf ear to their needs in this area. We must help them strive to be the best they can be

so they can compete. At the same time, we also have to show them that the world’s values are empty and temporal, and offer them the anchor of things eternal to keep them balanced and steady.

2. Learning Disabilities

The teenage years are a time of searching for an identity. During this time teens are struggling to feel successful and competent. As already mentioned they will measure their self-worth by comparing themselves to others, and by their success or failure in academics, relationships and extra-curricular activities.

Teenagers with learning disabilities, especially those who have gone undiagnosed (as the majority have), are at a greater risk for lowered school achievement, suspension from school, anti-social behavior and poor peer relationships. Problems with attention, concentration and impulsivity add to the feelings of failure and inadequacy that most have carried with them from childhood. In this world where performance is everything, life often becomes a nightmare of unattainable goals. They learn defense mechanisms to survive and these become armors that shield them from hurts and disappointments.

Failure at home, school, with peers and sometimes even at church causes them to perfect the “I don’t care” attitude. Being “bad” is usually used to cover up social and performance deficits. Bad is always better than stupid. A defiant and smart reply to a question can get a few laughs and maybe a little admiration from other kids. It’s also a way to avoid answering a question without looking dumb. Believing that he has no other options, the teen with a learning disability will sometimes gravitate toward the peer group that shares this attitude toward school and adult authority. It’s almost like he feels being “bad” is the only thing at which he can be good!

Toughness creates a smoke screen to mask vulnerability. While fighting against all rules and authority, the teenager with learning disabilities secretly fears that he will never be able to make it on his own. He is very painfully aware of his problems and is overwhelmed at the prospect of taking full responsibility for all the details of life. This teen also becomes an expert at blaming other people. This keeps everyone from looking too closely at his performance. While the “bad” person keeps others off balance with anger and hostility, blamers can never let anything go. To maintain his fragile emotional balance, he must have someone to blame for everything that happens.

A teenager who has a learning disability has spent much of his life being rebuked for things that he forgot to do or didn’t finish. He has been accused of being lazy and thoughtless all

of his life. This kid sometimes has a chip on his shoulder to protect what sense of self he has left. He has been attacked so much, that he feels like he can never let down his defenses. How can you tell if a teenager’s problems are really the symptoms of a learning disability? Listen carefully and observe them closely. Does this teen:

- give up easily?
- get angry or frustrated easily?
- jump from one thing to another quickly?
- bore easily?
- daydream a lot?
- always persist in testing the limits?
- do strange or impulsive things a lot?
- consistently shout when shouting is unnecessary?
- have difficulty understanding cause and effect?

Everyone from time to time will exhibit some of the behaviors listed above. But consistent display of clusters of such behaviors suggests a learning disability. Dr. Rick Fowler, an expert on Attention Deficit Disorder, says in his book, *Honey, Are You Listening?* that “ADD kids are like grass trying to grow in the sand. Because sand is soft, it dries out quickly, and it carries very little nourishment. To get grass to grow well there, you have to water constantly. You have to fertilize frequently because nutrients flush away in the loose substrate. You also have to protect your grass from being crushed by too many feet. ADD kids need constant fertilization and watering

in the same sense because they require more time and effort than do other kids. They need more praise, reinforcement, guidance, structure and protection. They also need a steady, but loving hand to rein them in occasionally.”

Every struggling underachiever needs a cheerleader, someone in his corner that can encourage him to be all that God created him be and to reach his full potential in life. He must feel unconditionally loved and accepted. He must be made to feel valuable and capable. He must feel that he is not alone. He needs to know that his past doesn’t have to determine his future and that it is never too late to learn.

Whatever the reason for underachievement, God has called us to be His hands and feet in the lives of these special teenagers. Before we can fill that role, we must be willing to see with His eyes, hear with His ears, and feel with His heart. We have the challenge and the privilege of helping to guide, encourage, love and protect these who belong to Him.

If you love an underachiever don’t ever give up. There is a reason that he is not “doing” school and you need to move heaven and earth if you have to in order to find out why, and to get him the help that he needs. Remember, God loves your child even more than you do, and has a wonderful plan for that child. It is God’s desire that your child succeed and achieve his potential in life.

You need to pray earnestly and claim the promises from God’s Word for your child.

Pray that God will focus all of His power and resources on your child and his needs. Pray that God will give you the strength and the wisdom to know how to help. Be encouraged and remember Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper and not harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.” And Isaiah 33:6 says, “He will be the sure foundation for your times; a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge.”

Every struggling underachiever needs a cheerleader, someone in his corner that can encourage him...

HOW TO STUDY

WHEN SCHOOL WORK DOESN'T COME EASY

A special section written by:

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I. Getting an Inside Look at the Grading Process

A. Most schools are committed to following the Bell Curve formula for grading.

10%	A
20%	B
40%	C
20%	D
10%	F

Those students who don't show an interest, those students with learning disabilities, and those students with learning differences can make it easy for teachers to fill the lower 30% of the Bell Curve formula without much struggle.

B. With this in mind, a student needs to alter the predictable outcome by getting to know his teacher. This is not brown-nosing — it is marketing! I tell students to come early to class, and learn some facts about the teacher (learn about their children, their hobbies, etc.).

Result: This will add 10% to a student's grade. How? Example: If a Bob knows the teacher well and an essay question is asked, the teacher will normally think (if the answer is somewhat ambiguous) "I know how Bob thinks — so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt." However, if the teacher doesn't know Bob well, he/she may conclude 'Bob is still giving me only 'filler material,' so I'll deduct X% off his grade."

C. The student needs to understand that he/she must do what it takes to win the game of school. School is a game!

- Sit in the front of the classroom if possible.
- Realize that you will never see over 90% of your school peers five years after graduation, so don't be afraid of their negative comments. Keep in mind many academically struggling peers don't want you to do well because your success will make them look bad... misery loves company.
- Ask questions in class and after class.
Rule of thumb: If in doubt — ask.

II. Getting Homework Assignments Done

- Set up a calendar and mark in all due dates.
- Divide all homework into manageable chunks. For example, if working on a term paper and the assignment is not due for one month, plug into your calendar each of the small manageable assignments. Then do only what is scheduled for that day. (This helps enhance the creative process and takes the drudgery out of homework.)
- For short-term assignments, guess-ta-mate how long each task will take. Then place a reward at the end of each evening's work. Example: If three assignments equal two hours, then start the assignment two hours before a favorite TV program. Then if the assignment is completed in the two-hour time frame, the reward is to watch the TV program in its entirety. However, failure to do so means that the first part or the entire TV program can't be watched until the homework is finished.
- While doing homework, have a distraction sheet. When something comes to mind like, "I forgot to call Mary," just write it down and take care of the call later. Also, don't accept phone calls during homework time.

III. Getting Prepared for a Test

- At the start of a semester, ask the teacher what to expect and how to study. Ask the teacher, “I am studying X, Y, Z, am I on the right track?” Study their responses for clues!
- Lecture material: Every day, take a lot of notes (especially write down what is put on the board). That same day rewrite those notes and add any additional information that comes to mind. Then, a few days before a major test, condense all lecture notes on one sheet of paper.
- Test material: Scan text first, then take notes on text; finally, before the major test, condense all on one sheet.
- When studying for the test, clear your desk of everything but those two sheets of paper. This tricks the brain, concluding “Only two sheets of material to study — no problem to master.”

IV. Getting the Best Results on Your Exams

- Don't cram for an exam one hour before the test. This only causes more stress.
- Practice deep-breathing exercises prior to the test. Take a deep breath and hold it, letting the air out slowly. Repeat several times. While you're exhaling is a good time to ask God for wisdom on the test you are about to take.
- When you first get the exam, don't look at it until you have turned it over and have written down any names, dates, and formulas. This will free your mind to produce better on the exam.
- As you begin the test, answer the questions you know first, next answer what you can guess at; then finally put something down for every item.
- After the test is returned, discuss questionable items missed with your teacher. If the teacher knows you are concerned and will debate your view in a positive (not “pesky”) way, he/she will think twice before marking something wrong — especially on a subjective question.

V. Final Thoughts

- School is a game — it is not a Life and Death event.
- God wants us to perform at our best, yet your personal worth is not tied to how you produce on exams.
- One bad test doesn't mean you will do poorly on future tests! If you strike out on an exam, think of the following baseball example: The best of the best in major league baseball will only get on base three out of ten times!
- Relax.

RELAX

school is
NOT a
life and death
event.