



the myth of the teenage rebellion

Sam Fryman

The MYTH OF THE TEENAGE REBELLION

- a short discussion

Sam Fryman

Copyright © Sam Fryman 2006

The current society is full of lies, and the news is for everybody under 90, that most of them are coming from the “authorities” which includes *parents*.

A friend who had been in therapy for drug addiction once asked me at what age I went through my teenage rebellion.

I told him I *never* went through a teenage rebellion, because *there wasn't anything to rebel against*.

Beyond a typical school religious upbringing, which they didn't force upon me either - they were just blindly following tradition like most parents did and still do – they never tried to make me into anything except a good human being.

It sickens me to see the bullying and bribery which the average parent inflicts upon the average child to make them a “success” and it really is the true iceberg of abuse, rather than merely the media grabbing tip of physical abuse which gets all the headlines, at the expense of the far more important wider issue of *mental abuse*.

It infuriates me further when I see – in passing understand, I'm not an addict – some mother or father on a soap opera barking orders at a teenage son or daughter “for his or her own good.”

For example, a mother criticising her daughter for stealing some drink from the cocktail cabinet and going to a “wild party” but pretending to her mother she is going somewhere else that she knows her mother would approve.

And the mother says something like “don't you know you silly girl that drinking is bad for you, and what harm it can do to your body?”

Which begs the question of course amongst others, of why her parents have a cocktail cabinet full of it, for the benefit of the “grown ups” you see, whom upon closer inspection usually really aren't very grown up at all except chronologically speaking.

Not that there is any harm in having a drink in moderation as a social lubricant.

But the bigger truth is that if you as a parent have an out of control teenager on your hands, rest assured you created him or her.

Either by neglect, or bullying, implanting your own ambitions, trying to live vicariously through your child, or by your own bad example in a thousand ways.

Of course, parents do not like to admit that the annoying teenager before them is their own creation.

They for example believe that working their fingers to the bone, ambitiously building a career or business, whilst neglecting their child in the process is just fine and dandy. They think they are being a great example and “role model” by holding that job down at the office or wherever and getting up the promotional ladder, whilst their young child pines for their attention, but never gets it, and maybe is brought up by their worn-out grandparents or looked after by some negligent or abusive childminder.

But what if you are a teenager or an adult, and you see that the lack of true love – i.e. proper care and attention and kindness and understanding of you – has caused your current unhappy, screwed up or even addicted state?

Then you have to *become your own parent*.

Nobody else is going to do it for you. Don't waste your time blaming *them* for being incompetent fools, or even worse *hating them for it*.

Why?

Because as one of my favourite philosophers J Krishnamurti says (try reading his book "Life Ahead")

When you hate someone, it hurts you (inside) more than it hurts them. It's like a wound festering inside you.

So as I explained in my book *How to Meditate*, the thing to do is simply to be *aware* of that case of explosives inside you regarding your parents, and learn to see how it can screw up every relationship you have with everybody in your life.

Be aware from moment to moment of for example the *fury* you feel when some unjust authority perpetrates some crime on you – for example give you a parking ticket in an unfair situation, and you take it personally and react with ten times the magnitude of the cause.

The reason is, this little injustice is *amplified*, because it pricks upon the "case of explosives" of anger and fury you have stored up from mistreatment and neglect by your parents as a child.

You may not *remember* all the details you see. We simply cannot live with all that garbage piling round our minds all day long, so Nature has seen to it that we normally forget the past.

But the *feeling* lives on.

For example, if our parents made us feel like we were never good enough, no matter how hard we tried, that feeling can stay with us all our lives.

For example, we may work for some boss, and we strive and strive to get their approval, get a pat on the head.

But this is the wrong motivation, because it is like seeking a pat on the head like a dog for fetching a stick its master or mistress has thrown.

And a lot of the time, you will notice, we seek approval for carrying out equally mindless and dumb tasks.

Not that there is anything wrong with doing simple tasks like washing up the dishes, digging the garden or whatever.

But the motivation should be that we do things with beauty for the sake of our own dignity as human beings, and if others do not appreciate our fine efforts, well – that’s their loss.

But that implies you see, that we should do things out of *duty* – that is because its right to do, it’s civilised decent behaviour – not to get someone else’s praise or have a medal awarded to us.

Because the problem with medals and praise is that they can be used as a weapon against you.

Person X is a *good* boy or girl, the authority (teacher, parent, governor, etc) tells us – they are getting a gold star.

But Person Y is a *bad* boy or girl, *so they say* and will receive damn all.

But then that’s just their *opinion* isn’t it, and we see from the “honours lists” that the deserving do not always get accolades, and the undeserving often do.

So the power you see, is to see this need you have for approval, and then to use that as a weapon against you, to deny you that to hurt you.

But if you aren’t *hurt*, then the weapon fails.

So how do you not get hurt?

You have to *grow up* in the true sense, which of course, your parents have never been able to explain to you, because quite frankly very few of them are truly “grown up” themselves. They are just *older* - that’s all, and because they have done enough begging and grovelling and serving often other equally immature beings, they sometimes have an important *job title*, which makes them swagger round and believe they deserve respect from other people.

Of course, there are a good number of decent people in society, who *do* deserve respect, but then they don’t necessarily have “important” job titles.

But parents know that most people get respected or not according to their job title – the doctor, lawyer and prime minister get respect, the man who cleans the toilets and the waiter in the restaurant don’t – so they bully you into trying to get such a position *for your own good*.

So from the purely egotistical point of you, their advice is often for your own good. They want you to fight, and strive, and slave like they did to make a live and name for themselves.

But the trouble is *the heart* gets trampled on in that process. People’s insides – their soul and emotions – get to feel like garbage.

And so you get to thirty or forty or fifty and you say – yes, I have a “good job”, a “career” and money, but you ask yourself, why you still feel like dirt, like nothing, or just a misery who needs loads of drugs, drink and excess sex to feel good about themselves.

So you see, the answer was above – *your heart, your soul*, the bright eyed individual you once were as a young child got trampled in that process.

So is it clear now, that there is really no such thing as a teenage rebellion after all?

Because the so called “teenage rebellion” is just what your parents made you to be – a confused rebel. You are then not acting against their wishes in the true sense, you are merely following the same self-destructive programming they have planted in you because they had it themselves.

For example, there was an episode of *Columbo* in which Patrick McGoohan of “The Prisoner” fame played a strict military training school captain.

One of his ex-trainee soldiers had now become a man, and had the power by inherited wealth to close the school down.

But this teacher of soldiers played by McGoohan had noted the “rebellious nature” of this ex-student, and so told him he had no right to fire the ceremonial cannon at the annual celebration, he was not worthy of it.

So because he was a rebel, he defied the captain’s authority and when he insisted on firing the cannon it blew up backwards and killed him, because the captain had sabotaged it to make that happen, because he *knew* that he would defy him, and thus bring about his own death.

So you see, the point is, this man was not merely a “teenage rebel.” He was a rebel *his entire life*.

And that is what happens to all of us, when we get screwed up by the time we are ten or eleven.

So what do we do about it, is there anything wrong with being a lifelong rebel, or even a teenage one?

Well, surely the above example, showed that in the extremity, it could end up getting us killed – this *compulsion* to defy “authority.”

For example, there is the true story of a man whose friends taunted him to prove his prowess at jumping from tall trees. His *need to prove himself* and *defy* their challenge, their mocking assertion that he couldn’t do what he claimed, made him jump off a high bridge onto concrete, and break half the bones in his body and almost die.

Or we can for example just do a lot of stupid things to defy our parents, or whichever authorities are annoying us, which *will* only damage us.

We think we are “self-destructive” if we keep doing these stupid things like getting so drunk or drugged or whatever that we can hardly stand or hold our senses.

But the truth is, we are still fighting (inside) the invisible enemy, we are still fighting on an ever new little battlefield the same unresolved conflict we once had with a parent.

So what’s the answer?

We have to realise it is all the anger and hate locked up inside ourselves that is perpetuating that inner war, which surfaces every time someone else challenges us to prove something, or tries to exert their authority over us in some way.

We are then as they say “playing the inner game.”

If you can see what is pulling your strings, pressing your buttons, that is the secret. Then *you have a choice*.

Realise, the next time someone gets you angry, realise that they are just pushing one of your buttons that your parents or whoever in your early childhood planted there by their mishandling of you.

And remember above all, that blaming others and getting angry is *not* the way to deal with this situation.

Why?

Because it *perpetuates* the problem. It is the case of explosives full of hate and anger and rage that has *caused* the problem. So when you realise finally – perhaps now, even for the very first time - just *why* you hate your parents, or have an unsatisfactory relationship with them, or even *with their memory* if they are dead or gone, you may get even more angry.

Well, get angry, but *not at them*. We don’t want any homicides as a result of these words.

What we want is *awareness, realisation*.

Watch yourself fume, over and over again if necessary. I mean *don’t indulge* it, but don’t try to suppress what is really there. You may even have to cry when these feelings emerge out into the open, because there will be guilt in there, because all the hate we feel for someone distorts our original feelings of love for them, we *want* to love them and they to love us, so we feel great sorrow at this tragedy of neither party truly loving the other.

You see, the problem is, we have a society of people who are comparatively speaking intellectual giants, but emotional pygmies.

They get a B plus in intellectuality, but an E minus in emotional control and maturity.

But you see, the B+ in intellectuality and a lot of bootlicking and slavery is all you need to get “a good job.”

So you get to be “proud”, but you don’t get to be *happy*.

You get to be what our current society calls “success”, but in your heart you feel a failure, and this failure is reflected in your relationships, which inevitably never work out, because *an immature conflicted person can never possibly relate to anyone else properly*.

It’s simple logic. If you have years of childhood traumas implanted on you, rattling around inside you like a case of explosives, and leaving your emotions tender to the touch like a tortoise without its shell to protect it, there’s no way you can relate to other people successfully except in a superficial way, like your parents probably do.

That is why so many children can see adults are comparatively speaking *without feeling*.

They have to act like automatons, robots, because that’s all they know how to do.

If they start letting their feelings surface, they will go through the same horror that you do as a “teenage rebel”, an “adolescent.”

The so called “adult” in this society, is merely somebody who has successfully trampled on their own thoughts and feelings to the point where they don’t really have any genuine ones any more.

The *artist*, the *musician*, the *actor* does the feelings for them, that’s how they get to feel all right.

They watch the persons who still have a human heart, as if they were visiting a museum – it’s nice to visit for a while, but *you wouldn’t want to live there*.

Watching someone else who has a heart, and is good, and has courage and bravery and is talented and beautiful makes us feel like we have got all those things too, but it is rarely so.

The people who *are* really something good, are busy *being* it, not watching *someone else* being it.

So what’s the answer?

We’ve defined the problem, but what’s the solution?

The answer is – whatever the rest of the world does, make your goal in life to be not a “success” in this society's terms – that is ambitious, powerful, proud – but a success as a human being – that is, someone whom people admire and love *for the right reasons* and cry at the funeral of instead of giving a round of applause.

But that does not mean just living to please others as we have said.

It means, to be *special in your own way*.

It means, doing something in life that means something to you, and benefits yourself and humanity in some way.

Even being the waiter in the hotel or the man who cleans the toilets can be a great service to others if you do it in a dignified way. Everybody is needed to make society, with whatever talents they have got.

Just make the best of yours.

Then there won't be any need to be a rebel of any kind.

You will have freedom, peace and love, and when the world is composed more and more of people like that, who have *made peace within themselves*, and therefore *with everybody else*, so will we all have those blessings, which just for the moment, so very few people ever have.

And how to be a parent?

If your child is a "teenage rebel" here is what to do.

First, let them read this *with you*.

Talk about it, think about it – for the first time, stop being such an "authority", and start being a *fellow human being*, start being a *friend* on the joint journey to a better place.

Say you are sorry to your child for the mistakes you made, e.g. working like a dog, but never being around - but your child has to realise too, that you didn't mean it.

This is *not* a blame game. Both parties have got to grow up for the first time *together*.

But of course parents may still have advice for their children, from having lived so much longer and seen more things.

Children don't realise that things have not changed so much over the centuries except in terms of technology. When they have desires and feel love, it's no different than it has been for their parents, and their parents before them for thousands of years.

This illusion children have that they are different from their parents, the so called "generation gap" is largely an illusion.

Fashions are different, but people don't much change.

Because what happens? Little does "the teenage rebel" realise, but in ten or fifteen or maybe even twenty years, they will end up just like their parents. The old have seen this generation after generation, but the young never believe it till it happens.

But the parent should advise in a different way as follows.

The girl goes to the cocktail cabinet and drinks some vodka, before topping the bottle up with water.

The parent discovers it.

The parent says – look, if you want to drink vodka, more than occasionally, realise it will harm your studies and your health.

You may hate your studies. Well, change what you study then. Find something you like, something you want to do.

Because if you do love what you do, you will want to do that, and not drink so much vodka.

The parent and child discuss not the superficial conflict, such as “illicit drinking”. They *discuss together* the problem and try to get to the root of it.

Try to find out why your life means so little to you, you want to escape it all the time, and do stupid things.

And *that* enquiry never dies. We make our way of life into something we love, something that means something to us. Then *all* the addictions disappear.

It’s just no good, impossible, fruitless, and productive merely of further chaos, to say “don’t do this”, “don’t do that”, when you have or are a miserable teenager looking for thrill and escape.

Why does the teenager want to escape?

Surely it’s from unhappiness, it’s from injustice, from feeling unloved and not fulfilled in their desire to love others.

So *that* is the *real* problem, the *root* problem, not the petty crime, violence, drug abuse, premature sex or whatever, which are we should explain to about two million not very understanding psychiatrists and “therapists” and about a billion or more equally lost parents *the symptoms*.

And then, let us remember the greatest thing any parent or human being can ever be, which may bypass words – *your example*.

Just think please!

Imagine two happy harmonious parents who love each other, and always resolve their differences in a kind, caring, tolerant and understanding way.

What kind of a child do you think they will produce?

The same of course, happy, caring, tolerant understanding and harmonious.

Now imagine two warped twisted immature parents slugging it out, playing mind games with each other and wheedling, bullying and cowardly their way through life like most of us do.

What kind of child do you think they will produce?

The same of course – warped, twisted, bullying, cowardly unhappy, etc. etc.

So we have to look at *ourselves* – and this applies to children too, and ask ourselves *are we fit to be parents?*

And if we are not, we had better not have children, or we had better do something about what we are.

And if it's too late, and we have children, but realise now we weren't fit, we just do the best we can to enlighten ourselves and them, starting now.

We don't try and pretend we are always right. We just have a sincere desire to help.

We don't try to make the children into carbon copies of us. We try to help them discover for themselves what it is they want to be, by giving them as wide as possible opportunities and support.

But we do impose firm discipline on them until a certain age – till about ten years old, but in an understanding way.

Some things we have to be tough on. We don't let them swig the whiskey bottle when they are six years old or put their hand in the fire, even if it takes a (non-abusive) slap to discourage them, if words aren't getting the point across sufficiently.

Because then they have *self-control*, because without self-control we are nothing.

We can never be any kind of soldier without it, and we just mean by that, a person who can fight if he has to, but never otherwise should.

But even to be a musician or a sportsperson or have any kind of success in any kind of skilled occupation or trade we need some of that discipline, that ability to focus.

If the motive of the parent is *right* they will know how to raise children. A book cannot really teach that. All the book or writing like this can do is to tell you *how to get your motivation right*.

Everything else follows from that, from having a clear and pure motivation and good heart.

But remember – the good are not weak, the good are strong. And that means being able to control ourselves at times, our emotions and our passions, if necessary by force of will.

For we may be walking in the woods or forest, and a snake may appear and be poised to attack us. And we may have to stay deadly still like a rock, and control all our fear until it stops hissing and goes away.

And there are many situations like that even in the human jungle, and that's why we have to have the ability at times to switch this "military self-discipline" on and off, sometimes we have to be more like *Mr Spock* than *Doctor Spock*.

So in finality, our premise was that there is no such thing as a teenage rebellion, it is only the inevitable expression of a pre-existing state of conflict created by years of neglect, when the child becomes physically large enough and mentally strong enough to start challenging the parent.

There should be no such thing as a teenage rebellion, but only harmonious teenagers who have respect for their parents, and above all *for themselves*.

When the teenager drinks from the vodka bottle, the parent must say

—"I wish you wouldn't do that. It's probably my bad example, my mistakes that you are as you are. I am sorry, I did my best, but now you will have to help yourself.

If you must drink, drink, but know the facts, the truth, and now I have no more judgement upon you, your life is your own, you must take responsibility for your own life, your own future, your own destiny."

As the head ape said as the rebellious spaceman Charlton Heston played in "Planet of the Apes" rode off into "the forbidden zone" in answer to "What will he find there?"

He will find *his destiny*.

Your destiny also will be only whatever you make it, and thus is only *you* who can see to it that your destiny will be better than his.

Just the very second we stop blaming everyone else for our problems, and start solving them for ourselves, will the world become a peaceful heaven overnight.