

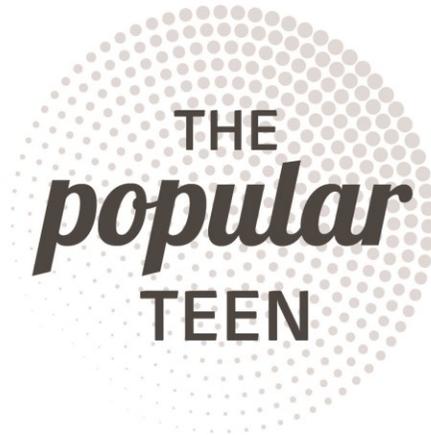
[The Popular Teen](#) & [YourSuccessfulKid.Com](#) Present

Four Secrets to Raising Outgoing and Popular Kids



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*Authors of **The Teen Popularity Handbook: Make Friends,
Get Dates, And Become Bully-Proof***



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Introduction:

Why Popularity?

Every parent I know wants their kids to be happy and well-adjusted. We want our kids to have a much better social and academic experience than we did. We want them to avoid the awkwardness, embarrassment, loneliness, depression, and bullying every one of us experienced as children, pre-teens, and teens.

The problem is that most parents don't even know where to begin making their kid's life better, because their own lives are disarray. It is difficult to give a kid relationship advice when our adult ones are breaking down. How can we teach our child how to meet someone new when the thought of approaching a stranger terrifies us?

How can we show our kids how to stand up to bullies when we have let the middle-manager at work bully us for the last ten years?

Don't worry. We have you covered. There is a science behind popularity. It is no secret why your kid or even you are struggling socially.

If your child has a question about the quadratic equation, you wouldn't say something like, "Just be yourself and do what comes naturally." Not only would she fail the test, she wouldn't ever be able to apply the quadratic equation in real life (My math teacher in high school assured me it has real-world applications – I'll trust her on that)!

Yet when a kid has social problems, we give unhelpful answers, like "just be yourself" or "you'll make friends soon; just be patient." Imagine if at work you really wanted to know how to learn a skill that you needed to get a huge raise, and your boss said "just be yourself." You'd be furious and depressed at such a non-answer. Yet...when our kids need help, this is the type of responses we give.

As a teacher, I see successful kids all the time, and I've realized that the most successful students (and teachers) have something more than just the ability to learn basic facts and think about things. *They have positive social skills!*

I am not the only person that believes this. Studies have shown that kids that are popular in school [are more financially successful](#) later in life. [Another showed](#) that it wasn't a person's college GPA that determined their success in a job, but their *verbal fluency*, their ability to effectively communicate and relate to others!

What about getting that raise? Certainly a smart guy with the most technical knowledge will get the biggest raise in an organization...right? No. It is how well-liked you are. That is right. [How much you make at work is determined by your popularity](#). [Another study](#) found that the ability to influence, lead, and negotiate (i.e. have the right personality traits) constitutes 85 percent (yes, **85 percent!!**) of work success.

I know a lot of parents that help their kids do homework and study for tests. I know very few that help their kids learn the positive social skills to become more popular and well-liked, even though studies show a child's *social* abilities are just as important (and maybe more important) than his academic abilities to later success.

Having social skills is even important for academic success, [according to another study](#). That is right: positive social skills do than just help your kids make friends; they increase academic performance too.

By signing up for *Your Successful Kid*, and reading *The Teen Popularity Handbook: Make Friends, Get Dates, and Become Bully-Proof* and this e-book you are starting the process right.

So let's get into the "meat" of this e-book, now that you are convinced of the importance of developing your son or daughter's social abilities.

Secret One:

Talk, Talk, And Talk

I had an adult client who struggled to make conversation as an adult. He didn't feel that he was funny or interesting. He knew that this deficiency was hurting his social life, as well as his career as a small business owner.

I decided to dig a little deeper and find out why conversation was so difficult for him. It turns out his parents not only hated "small talk" but discouraged anything fun as "frivolous." Hmm...in a world where people are looking for fun and great conversation, this put him at a massive social disadvantage.

Maybe you're not opposed to small talk, and maybe you do have fun. But do you actually engage your kids in meaningful conversation?

I have a three year old daughter, and because her brain is extra *neuroplastic*, meaning she is making neural connections in the brain at a rapid pace, she learns very

quickly. I notice all the time she uses phrases that my wife and I do, and her facial expressions often match ours. She laughs at what we laugh at. Kids' brains are neuroplastic up until the teenage years, which means they are taking in your mannerisms, responses, humor, etc., and often integrating that into their own personalities.

So if you aren't carrying on regular conversations with them, or encouraging them to do so with others, you aren't helping them improve their *verbal fluency*, which you should recall from a few pages ago, is more important than their GPA in their future career success.

So, talk to your kids. Carry on conversations. Even (gasp) eat dinner together as a family. Let them see how normal conversation happens. Let them see how people laugh, talk, and express themselves normally.

If you ask "how was your day?" and you get the inevitable "fine" that you've heard daily for the last three years, then start asking them more directed questions that actually interest them, like, "Did you play any good songs during band?" "What plays did you run today on offense at practice," or "Do you have anything I might like on your Ipod?"

You make an effort to help them with their homework and take them to practice. Make them pull out their headphones and put their phones away for a few minutes when you talk to them. Emphasize the importance of conversation and

(shock, shock) they will actually become better at making conversation. Using words properly in conversation is crucial for making requests (“I need an extra day for my homework, Mrs. Pollock”), getting dates (“Hey, we should really get some ice cream later”), and even standing up to bullies. How can your child learn conversation if you won’t even talk to her, or emphasize its importance?

Our client learned how to “fake it until he made it” and practiced making conversation. Because we also taught him how to read people’s body language, he knew when people didn’t like what he said, or were bored, so he adjusted accordingly. Now I love having a conversation with the guy.

What if *you* can’t make conversation? Then, guess what? Just like you brushed up on your algebra skills to help your son in math, you can find resources to improve your conversational skills.

Secret Two:

Assertiveness Is Key

We all have needs (and wants) and we all want to have those needs met. As a teacher, I have students approach me with needs all the time. They have to pee, want to eat in class, need an extra day on their homework, or just need to talk. I'm a pretty flexible person, but I can't grant every request.

There are effective ways to get what you want, and there are ineffective ways. Unfortunately, many adults use so many ineffective ways that it is not wonder kids are so clueless about making requests.

The first ineffective way people often communicate is *aggressively*. They threaten physical or verbal force. This may express itself as tantrums, swearing at someone, or even threatening physical force if a person doesn't respond. The problem with being aggressive is that in our civilized society, it can get you in trouble, and it doesn't work, at

least not in the long run. Adults and kids that use these tactics aren't really respected, but instead feared or mocked. If your kid is a bully or has to make emotional threats to get his way, it is no wonder nobody really likes him.

Another way to communicate is *passively*. This amounts to not communicating at all. It is holding in your real thoughts and remaining sad, frustrated, or whatever negative emotion you are feeling because you couldn't express yourself. Maybe your child really needs to tell her best friend to stop gossiping about her to others, because it is hurting her. However, she stays quiet, letting it build and build until she feels suicidal. While aggressive communication is an unhelpful extreme, so is being passive.

A third unhelpful way of communicating is *passive-aggressive* communication. This is basically being passive to a person's face, while being aggressive in intent or behind a person's back. It may be agreeing to do a job and then purposefully doing a bad job, or being nice to a person's face and then stabbing them in the back later.

Do any of these sound familiar? Maybe *you* use these same skills. The problem is that these are harmful for a variety of reasons that we can't go into here. As a parent it is important to identify if you are using these strategies with your own kids. If you are, it is no surprise that your child is communicating in similar ways.

If you want your child to be more outgoing, it is possible he learned from you that if you have a need, you bottle it up. You desperately want to express yourself, but you don't. I have relatives like this. They *really* have an important need, but they don't say anything about it. Then, a few weeks later, they lash out bitterly about how nobody cares about them. Sound familiar?

If you want your child to become more outgoing, you need to teach him or her assertive communication, and model it yourself.

Assertive communication is clearly spelling out your needs and wants in a way that isn't threatening to another person. Let me give you an example of assertive communication versus other types, and you can see why people that are liked and admired communicate assertively.

A friend asks you to help him move at the last minute, even though you're busy, and he has put off doing the work himself for weeks. His procrastination makes you angry.

Aggressive - "(Bleep) you, you idiot. I ought to come over there and kick your (bleep). This always happens!"

Passive - "I'm kinda busy, but I'll be over to help anyway. Sure...yeah...no problem."

Passive-Aggressive - "Sure, I'll be over" (then you purposely break his stuff while moving and text your wife how much you hate him).

Assertive – “I am busy right now Jim. You know how this last minute stuff aggravates me. Give me more notice and I’d be glad to help you.”

The assertive style is honest and respectful. People admire that type of communication. They quickly get sick of the other types. If your teen son or daughter is communicating in the other ways, he or she is likely perceived as a bully (aggressive), “shy kid” (passive), or sneaky punk (passive-aggressive).

I don’t grant requests as a teacher to aggressive students. I don’t even know the needs of passive kids, and once I discover sneaky behavior, I let my students know about it, and my disdain for it. If a student wants something from me, he or she will have to be assertive about it. When you are assertive (cool and respectful, but in a way that expresses your needs and concerns), you’ll be amazed how many people listen.

Secret Three:

Model Health and Fitness

I woke up daily to the smell of sausage sizzling in the kitchen. It was nice of my dad to cook for his sons. I would stumble down the stairs, still groggy, to quickly lap up two gigantic sausage patties, each resting between a white bread bun. Then, I would go to school and pine for lunch, waiting until I could eat even worse. I was overweight, out of shape, and didn't have much confidence.

This shouldn't be too shocking. A [recent study at Harvard](#) showed that depression may be caused by bodily inflammation, including eating unhealthy inflammatory foods. [Another study](#) showed that something as simple as exercising outside decreased depression levels by over seventy percent! So, if you want your kid to be more outgoing and popular, keeping them healthy is very important. Common sense tells us a healthier kid is going to be happier and have more self-confidence. Science tells us the same thing.

My dad was an athlete in high school and college. When I was younger, I saw him play softball and basketball three to four days a week. I was in great shape then. When he quit doing that, and started eating horribly, he gained a bunch of weight. About that same time, I did too. It was only when I entered high school that I became sick of being overweight and unpopular that I got my stuff together.

Your kids may deny it, but as a parent, you influence them tremendously. Because of both nature and nurture, they will look and act like you! It is important for *you* to make healthy choices, and model that to your kids.

When I played football in high school, we didn't always respect our head coach. He was pretty overweight and would rest on a cooler while we sprinted. Occasionally he would tell us to stop dogging it. Ironic words indeed.

On the other hand, we had a coach who would often do the conditioning *with us*. Guess who we admired more?

That's right. We admired and learned from the guy actually doing it with us.

You might be telling your kid to get good grades, push harder in sports, or lose a little weight to be more attractive to the opposite sex. There is nothing wrong with any of these statements. But...are you *showing* them how all of this is done.

Are you showing them the value of grades by learning new things, or are they only seeing you play Facebook games? Are you showing them the value of athletics by participating in them, or do they just see you sit on the coach all evening? Are you working to lose those extra pounds, or are you just...ahem...telling them to do it?

You'll notice a lot of these tips involve getting *your* life in order. It is not about simply telling your son or daughter the right thing to do. We all know how well that works. We have all been teens. Teens are great at figuring out inconsistencies in authority figures.



So *how* do you start getting your household healthy? I'm not going to get into the details here, because it is way beyond the scope of this book to do that. I personally prefer a lower carb program, avoiding too many grains and sugars. I also regularly run, hike, walk, and so forth. Either way, I want to discuss a few tips to get your kids to go along with it.

Most unhealthy kids want to get healthy. They are sick of being overweight or out of shape. They are just basically addicted to that way of doing things. Suggesting a change

can be difficult. I suggested framing the change as “we’re all going to try to get healthy and start looking better together! I may even lose this beer gut.”

Try to approach it as a positive change the entire family is going to do together. Make sure it is framed as beneficial (“we’re all going to start looking and feeling better”) as opposed to adversarial (“we’re too fat and lazy, especially you”).

One simple way is to start planning family time that is more active. Most of my activity growing up centered on eating. Maybe your house is the same way. I believe in the importance of sharing meals together, but you can do things as a family that don’t involve food, like hiking, walking, etc.

Secret Four:

Teach Them Skills

I like reading about physics. I find it fascinating. I am not that capable of understanding much, especially the math behind it, but I love reading about it. When I want to find information, I go to the Internet, books, and even documentary series like *The Universe*. I have a pretty good understanding of it for a layman.

If your daughter wanted to understand physics, you'd probably approach it similarly. You'd go out and actually find concrete ways to help her. If your son wanted play basketball in the winter, but didn't have many skills, you'd find a coach in the off season to work with him, right?

Yet, with social skills, parents take the opposite approach. If your daughter is lonely and can't get a date, your response is "the right guy will come along; just be patient." If she asked about learning physics, would you say, "the right textbook will come along; just be patient." NO!!

Your son is struggling to fit in at school and isn't making friends. Your response is, "just be yourself." If your son wanted help with basketball, would you respond, "just be yourself." If you did, he wouldn't make the basketball team in a thousand years. Do you really think any successful basketball player was "just himself?" Heck no! Successful players learned the skills to excel at basketball, and then practiced them.

This is very, very, very, important, so pay attention. When a kid has problems related to a lack of social skills, it *is* a big deal, especially given the importance of having a good personality that we outlined above.

Most kids don't know how to remedy social problems, and unfortunately neither do most parents, as the "non-answers" above illustrate. Social skills can be taught, learned, and practiced. If your kid is awkward, shy, creepy, frustratingly dateless, etc., this can be changed the same way a kid who can't even dribble a basketball can improve to make the team.

For example, let's take a simple exercise we do with many of our clients. Believe it or not, we use this exercise with *adult male clients*. Yes, it is not just kids that struggle socially. Turning eighteen, thirty, or even fifty, won't magically make your personality amazing.

We play a game, called "The 'Hi' Game." My brother and I go to a mall, walk around with clients, and we have a

competition to see who can say “hi” to the most people. The only rule is that the person must be reasonably able to see us. It doesn’t matter if they respond or not. In fact, sometimes it is good if the person doesn’t respond or looks confused. It shows the client that it isn’t the end of the world if a person doesn’t acknowledge him back.

Something interesting happens by the end of the game. Since it is a competition, most guys get into it. At first, they are shy and awkward, and even scared. By the end, they are assertively trying to be the first to say “hi” to a stranger because either Jonathan or I can jump in and say it first. Then, we move onto initiating longer conversations.

This is a fun game that actually works to make clients more confident, extroverted, and outgoing. To see a person go from shy, insecure, and uptight to outgoing, confident, and having fun in a span of about thirty minutes is very rewarding. Just as a volleyball coach has the team practice various drills to improve on player skills, there are ways to improve social skills the same way!

If you haven’t already done so, please subscribe to the *Your Successful Kid* newsletter by going to yoursuccessfulkid.com. We send out 2-3 actionable tips each week similar to the content in this e-book, and what appears on thepopularteens.com.

The most important thing you can do right now is to get excited! Your kid (and even you!) is beginning a new chapter

of his or her life. Personality transformation is fun and exciting, especially as you begin to experience the many benefits of being able to win people over: friends, dates, standing up to bullies, getting free stuff because people like you, people will finally listen to you, and so forth.