



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS FROM ROGD REPAIR

Twelve Things Parents Kick Themselves For

A map of where the road bends — and what to do tomorrow.

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Every parent who comes to me arrives with a private inventory. The particulars differ from family to family, but a dozen items repeat so consistently that I can usually guess several before a parent names them.

Read this as a map of where the road bends, and use it to decide what you do tomorrow.

1 Giving him a phone with the understanding that it was his.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

Every other kid had one, and he needed it for school, for rides, for coordinating with friends. You handed it over the way you'd hand over a bicycle, and privacy came bundled with the gift, because you remember how much your own diary mattered to you at that age.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

Privacy is the hardest permission to take back. By the time you have reason to look, looking has become a betrayal, and every restriction you add arrives precisely when he is preparing for adult freedom, so it registers as punishment rather than protection.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

If you have younger children, establish from the first device that there is no expectation of privacy. If you are already past that point, walk it back through a family conversation about internet safety, and tell them you check their communications as something that has always been true.

GO DEEPER [Implementing a Digital Sabbath & Drawing Your Kid Out of Their Room](#)

2 Reading her good behavior as proof that she was safe.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

She got good grades and never sneaked out. Teachers called you about her brother, never about her. The restrictions stayed loose because no incident ever arrived to make them feel necessary, and tightening them would have insulted a child who had done nothing wrong.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

The compliant, bright, slightly awkward girl is the profile, and her good behavior is what purchased the unsupervised hours. Those hours are where the work got done, usually with one consuming friendship and a chat server you had never heard of.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Uncouple supervision from trust, and keep her freedom matched to the responsibility she has actually demonstrated. Pay particular attention to any single friendship that has become her whole social world, especially one conducted at a hundred messages a day.

GO DEEPER [Mapping Your Child: The Trifecta + What = Perfect Storm?](#)

3

Assuming the school was on your side.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

You went to the conferences and liked her teachers. School was the institution you handed her to for eight hours a day, and it had never occurred to you that it might keep something from you on purpose.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

Districts around the country ask children what name they would like used and whether their parents should be told. Your daughter may have months of practice being someone else all day, supported by adults who believe they are protecting her from you.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Learn your district's policy before you need it, and ask in a way that doesn't put a target on your back.

GO DEEPER [Code-Switching: How We Navigate Different Social Environments](#)

4

Losing your temper in the first five minutes.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

He said something that detonated, and years of accumulated worry arrived all at once. You had been telling yourself this happens in other families, so you were unrehearsed when it happened in yours.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

The blow-up gets filed as evidence, and it becomes the story he tells his friends and any clinician he sees. If he went flat and expressionless instead of crying, you may have read that as no harm done, which is worth reconsidering.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Repair it specifically. Several parents I work with have gone back days later, said plainly that they had behaved badly, and asked forgiveness, and their children granted it. Keep the apology on your conduct; your position on medicalization stays exactly where it was.

GO DEEPER [Strategic Apologizing: A Helpful Tool for Delivering Hard News](#)

5

Asking her why she feels this way.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

It is the most natural question a loving parent can ask. You wanted to understand her, and every message you have ever received about parenting told you to listen first.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

Most of these young people have little insight into their own motives, so what she gives you is the script she absorbed. Each recitation deepens the neural pathway that holds the belief in place, and she has now practiced defending it against her own mother.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Do the work of understanding the why on your own time, with help. When you talk with her, ask about other people, since observations about her friends and classmates rarely trigger the self-consciousness that makes her defend herself.

GO DEEPER [Use "What" and "How" Questions, Rather Than "Why"](#)

6

Offering her the healthier version of what she said she wanted.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

She told you she wanted muscle, a lower voice, a flat chest. You reached for the part you could support and said you'd help her get strong, or that she could dress however she liked, or that you were a tomboy yourself and nobody called you trans.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

She is pursuing a fantasy of becoming an entirely different person, and your offer treats it as a fitness goal or a wardrobe preference. She hears the substitution as a refusal of the fantasy, which is why so many of these conversations end with some version of *that's not what I was talking about, Mom*.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Leave the stated goal alone and work on the unstated one. Build her competence and self-respect in areas that have nothing to do with sex or gender, so that the relief she is chasing starts arriving from something she earned.

GO DEEPER [Don't Burst Their Bubble; Try to Understand the Bubble](#)

7

Bringing out the research.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

You had read the studies and the detransition accounts, and the evidence had persuaded you. Your daughter is intelligent, so it followed that the same material would persuade her.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

Serving your opinion as the main course gives her something to push away from, and she came to the table for something else entirely. Arguing also costs you standing, since debating a fifteen-year-old is what you do once your authority has run out.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Bake the vegetables into the casserole. Treat your disapproval as a settled fact she already knows about, and spend your energy on conversations where she can hear her own doubts out loud.

GO DEEPER [Resist the Urge to Over-Share; Make Them Ask for Information Instead](#)

8

Making the small concessions to keep the peace.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

The name at Thanksgiving, the pronouns in front of his friends, the haircut. Each concession looked small beside the relationship, and you believed the goodwill would be banked and returned when you drew your line at medicalization.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

The goalposts move. You receive no credit for what you gave, you get called unaccepting anyway, and the further a social transition goes, the more he hungers for the medical one, because being seen as a girl convinces him he must become one.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Stop defending how accepting you are, since the label is coming regardless. Choose each accommodation on the merits of whether it helps him, and let the accusation sit unanswered.

GO DEEPER [Get Out of the F.O.G. of Emotional Blackmail](#)

9

Holding the line alone while your spouse held a different one.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

One of you decided the relationship mattered most and one of you decided the truth did, and neither of you wanted a marital fight staged in front of a suffering child. So you each did what seemed right in your own conversations with her.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

She learned within a week which parent to route around, and the one holding the line became the family obstacle rather than a parent. Disagreeing in front of her puts the divide on display and hands her something to work with.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Settle it privately and in advance, then present one position. Where you cannot agree on everything, agree on the smallest set of commitments you can both defend without flinching.

GO DEEPER [Secrets Policies and Parental/Familial Triangulation](#)

10

Letting her opt out of whatever made her uncomfortable.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

She wouldn't get in the pool, wouldn't go to the party, wanted to switch schools after a falling-out with her friends. Insisting felt cruel when she was already miserable, so you let each one go.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

Avoidance grows whatever it protects. Every accommodation confirms that the swimsuit or the party was genuinely dangerous, and over time she loses the ability to distinguish ordinary discomfort from actual threat.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Require her participation in ordinary life and expect the resistance that comes with it. You dealt with dirty diapers when she was small; a bad attitude on the way to the pool is the version you get now, and it passes once she is in the water.

GO DEEPER [Comfort and Challenge: The Paradoxical Relationship](#)

11

Doing for her the things she was supposed to be doing herself.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

It was faster to do the laundry yourself, and she was anxious and struggling, and adding chores to a depressed teenager's load seemed heartless.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

She arrived at sixteen with a powerful hunger for independence and almost no evidence of her own competence, so the independence had to be claimed somewhere it could not be tested. Rescue removed exactly the small failures that would have built a self worth having.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Hand the tasks back, say once that you have been unclear and that the laundry is now hers to run, and then stop stepping in. When she skips it for a week and opens an empty drawer on Monday morning, she has met the consequence of her own choice, and the lesson came cheap.

GO DEEPER [Identity, Confidence, and Competence: the Crux of What Your Child Truly Needs](#)

Handing her to a therapist you hadn't vetted.

WHY IT MADE SENSE AT THE TIME

She was suffering, you wanted help quickly, and the practice took your insurance and had a warm website. Asking a licensed professional about their views on gender felt intrusive and slightly paranoid.

WHY IT BACKFIRED

An affirming clinician converts your daughter's belief into a clinical position and gives her an adult ally against you. The relationship is then difficult to end, and a therapist she has trusted for three years is three years you cannot recover.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Interview any clinician before your child meets them, and ask directly how they would handle a gender-questioning adolescent. Treat public directories with caution, since the profile that reassures you may be the reason she was found by the wrong people.

GO DEEPER [Therapists: Guilty Until Proven Innocent?](#)

ONE CAUTION

Some of these young people have learned to present their parents' regrets as an invoice. One father heard it nearly word for word: *I know you feel guilty, I know you feel like you should have done a better job raising me, so this is what you owe me.*

Guilt you can name and correct is worth having. Guilt that someone else gets to spend will cost your daughter far more than it costs you.

GO DEEPER [Adopt a Posture of Non-Defensiveness to Soothe, De-Escalate, and Model Healthy Interactions](#)



Knowing where the road bends
is the beginning, not the repair.

Every lesson linked above is part of ROGD Repair, a course and community for parents doing exactly this work. Join us there.

VISIT [ROGDREPAIR.COM](https://rogdrepair.com)

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