

Some perfect people

Finally, I have discovered a group of people who are perfect. They know everything about everything. They are experts in everything. They have all the answers to questions you were stupid enough to ask them. They are specialists on all fashion trends and are quick to point out, if you are not, then, you are not only out of touch but you are ancient. They are on the cutting edge of technology with fingers that are quicker than the movement of hand of a magician. They were born at the wrong time because they have nothing to learn. They are experts in everything, waiting, not only to be discovered, but acknowledged for their wisdom that goes far beyond their years.

Who are these people? Well, I have been discovering such recently as I observe the expertise of my niece who, very dramatically, fits into this category of people.

In the past, during my month-long vacations before retirement, I just got a short and glancing perspective on such persons. Now, having being retired, on a day to day basis, I get a better perspective on such wonderful, mature, dedicated, well-rounded, deeply passionate and expert persons by seeing my sixteen year old, niece in action.

Being a teenager who lived in the last century, my mother used to say of her children, “they are going to drive me to an early grave.” Well, we didn’t succeed. She lived until she was eighty-six years old. Now, I hear a mother’s cry as she says, “I’m too old to go through this.” Then, like most mothers, she makes a veiled wish in her heart, “I hope that when you have kids, that they turn out just like you.” Maybe it is a case of “justice delayed is justice denied.” Rationalize as you will, which diagnosis is more palatable: Hormonal or “going through a phase?”

Sometimes, in trying to engage such a group in conversation, one has to lick one’s wounds and just become monosyllabic with one’s responses. “How was your day at school today?” “Take your choice of the following answers: “Fine.” “Stressed.” “I hate school.” “Teacher X hates me.” “I’m going to quit school.” Then, there is no point in trying to engage in any meaningful conversation by asking, “Do you want to talk about it?” The obvious answer is “No.” Behind such a response, you know that he or she would only talk to their friends, if they have any, which depends on their mood at that particular moment of that particular day. It doesn’t matter if their friends had the same kind of depressing day. After all, only they could understand. So, it is better to have company that shares misery which mimics understanding.

If one is stupid enough to press the teenager to talk about what is bugging them, one is often met with the blanket statement – “I don’t want to talk about it.” End of communication gap means no further opportunity for conversation.

I am in my car. Sitting beside me is one such teenager. I hear the question, “Can I turn on the radio?” Now, I know that there is no point in getting philosophical about the request. I could point out that one is not so physically challenged that one cannot press the radio knob. I could try to rephrase the request by stating, “Maybe, you might think about the difference between, “Can I..” and “May I..” I know it would be pointless because after all, I would not be as knowledgeable as my passenger.

Whoever said that life is wasted on youth is pretty wise. After all, youth know it but, then again, it is wasted on them. They know it all yet, have lived only a short few years. They have hundreds of friends but in a moment of weakness, if not honesty, they admit they have no friends or are no longer friends with their best friends. They don’t need to be told to go to their room as punishment, they are there already. There, they converse through finger clicking roaming while they hone in on anyone who might be available to chat on their particular wavelength.

I am reminded of a story about Mark Twain. When he was eighteen years old, he thought his father was the most stupid, the most ignorant person he ever met. He was amazed when he became twenty one years old, how much his father had changed.

When a person is imprisoned for life for a heinous crime, there may be a chance of parole for good behavior. When a parent is imprisoned in their own home by having a teenager, hopefully, there is a chance they might get parole when the teenager finally realizes that they are not all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful. Maybe, someday, like Mark Twain, they will realize how much their father or mother has changed.