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**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Parents Just Don't Understand**

How much do you reveal to your mom and dad?

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**What Happened:**

Pop star Lady Gaga says she doesn't do hard drugs anymore, but she admits that when she was younger and still living with her parents, she did. What made her stop? The sight of her father.

"I was just partying and being very self-indulgent and trying to find myself," she said in a special that aired on the CW network Sept. 12. "In hindsight, it's so dangerous; and I don't encourage anyone to follow that path. I remember my dad...I was actually doing drugs in my parents' house one day, and they didn't know I was in the bathroom. I came out, and my father could tell; and I just remember feeling so embarrassed, and I quit instantly."

Lady Gaga's story illustrates two interesting dynamics between teens and their parents: For one, teens rarely tell their moms and dads if they're involved in anything bad. For another, parents still have influence in their teens' lives.

According to a recent study, more than half of 10<sup>th</sup> grade teens have consumed alcohol in the past month; and more than a quarter have used marijuana. Parents aren't blind to these bad influences, and most understand their children's peers are likely to drink and/or use drugs: In fact, parents on average think 60 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders drink and guess that around 40 percent use pot.

Most parents don't believe their own children are using alcohol or drugs: Just 10 percent of parents believe their own children consumed booze in the past year, and 5 percent believe their teens have used drugs, which means some parents don't know what their kids are doing.

Surprising? Probably not. How many teens would talk to their parents about their own drug use? Not many. It's not just drugs we're talking about here. Youth tend to keep lots of things from their parents, whether grades, who they're hanging out with or how they're using the family computer. The truth is, some parents don't really know much about their kid's lives.

It's not just "bad" kids—kids who use drugs or sneak out their bedroom window at night—who keep secrets. Teens who aren't in trouble sometimes try to protect their

parents from the messy realities of their lives. They don't want to worry them or jump-start uncomfortable conversations. Maybe they're worried their parents will overreact.

That's a shame, because most parents really would like to help—even if they don't always know the best way to do so. Studies suggest many teens trust and respect their parents more than anyone else in the world. As it happened with Lady Gaga, sometimes a parent can help steer their kids toward better decisions with just one look.

**Talk About It:**

Do you keep secrets from your parents? Are they big secrets or small ones? Is it sometimes necessary to keep secrets? Why or why not?

If you do hide things from your parents, why? Is it because you don't want to get in trouble? Because you don't want to hurt them or worry them? Would they not understand? Would they overreact?

What happened the last time you told your mom or dad a secret? What did they do? How did they react? Did they help the situation? Hurt it? Did they offer helpful advice? Is there a way you could talk with them that might help things turn out better?

Have you ever kept a secret that your parents discovered before you told them? How did that work out?

If you were in serious trouble—stranded somewhere or in a situation that was way over your head? Who would you call? Why?

**What the Bible Says:**

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov. 12:15).

“For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open” (Luke 8:17).

“My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you” (Prov. 6:20-22).