

## Wit's End

The article “Wit’s End” by syndicated humorist Dave Barry might be used in the following ways in a practice setting:

■ **As a handout for young adolescents**

Give this article to young adolescents who seem to feel their parents do not relate to their generation. Perhaps include a note on the top about this feeling being common, and suggest that they share and discuss the article with their parents. The article might also be used to initiate conversation about family with the adolescent during the visit.

■ **As a handout for parents**

Give this article to parents who seem overly concerned about their adolescent’s behavior and interactions with peers. Perhaps include a note on the top, such as, “Being a teen isn’t easy these days, but being a parent can be challenging, too!” Humor can be a nice way to help parents gain perspective on and understanding of their adolescent’s developmental needs.

■ **As a handout in the waiting room**

Have copies of the article in the waiting room to encourage a lighter mood and perspective.

■ **As a handout for staff**

Share the article with staff as a lighthearted reminder of the everyday realities of adolescent development.

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### WIT'S END

#### The Young and the Restroom

By Dave Barry

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH DRAMA in your life, you need to chaperone a party for a group of seventh-graders. ("Chaperone" comes from the French words "chape" meaning "person" and "rone" meaning "who is aging very rapidly.")

We recently had a party for our son's 13th birthday. We rented a Holiday Inn function room on the theory that it was roomier and less flammable than our house. We hired two nice young deejays to play ugly music really loud so that the youngsters would enjoy it. We ordered a large quantity of cold cuts for the youngsters to ignore, as well as a nice fresh vegetable platter for them to actively avoid.

We stood near the door and greeted the guests and their parents as they arrived. There seemed like a LOT of guests, more than we recalled actually inviting. Apparently this party was giving off some kind of powerful airborne adolescent hormonal chemical attractant for 13-year-olds. People were streaming into the function room. The kids would melt instantly into the throbbing blob of youth that had formed in the middle of the dance floor. Their parents would look us over, trying to discern whether we were decent people or Branch Davidians or what. There was no way we could talk to them, because the sound system was cranked up to KILL ZONE, playing songs that consisted of angry men shouting things like:



*This song is PAIN!  
Makes you inSANE!  
This song grows big warts!  
On your BRAIN!*

So we'd smile at the parents like Ward and June Cleaver and gesture to the vegetable platter as evidence that we were responsible. They'd nod and scurry out of the function room before their ears started to bleed.

Meanwhile, in the center of the room, things were getting very dramatic. Of course we had no clue what was going on, because we are grownups, and therefore way too stupid to grasp the complexities involved in being a seventh-grader. Later on our son gave us a much-simplified version, which was that this girl had been going with this boy, but then she dumped him, although she liked him and wanted to still be his friend, but the boy's best friend got angry at the girl and called her a bad name, which caused her to become extremely upset and burst into tears, and she thought that the ex-boyfriend had put the best friend up to this, which he hadn't, in fact he didn't even KNOW the best friend had done this, and now he (the ex-boyfriend) was VERY upset because she thought HE was responsible, and he was also angry at the best friend, who was ALSO very upset because he was just trying to help out his friend and now EVERYBODY was mad at him, so EVERYBODY was upset, and everybody's FRIENDS were upset, and things were just so dramatic and awful that it did not seem possible that life as we now know it could continue on the planet EARTH.

As I say, it was actually far more complex than this, with dramatic new developments occurring

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every few seconds. The central throbbing youth blob was constantly pulsating and mutating and splitting into smaller groups and subgroups to whisper, hug, discuss, commiserate or—if it was a group of boys—punch. Every few minutes a group of maybe 14 girls at least two of them crying, and at least two of them saying something like “I can’t stand it” would rush past us out the door and into the ladies’ restroom. Moments later a clot of boys would rush out and go into the men’s restroom. Then there would be tense diplomatic negotiations between restrooms, with a small party emerging from the men’s restroom to talk with a party from the ladies’ restroom. (“He just wants to talk to her!” “She’s VERY UPSET!”) Then everybody would surge back into the function room, and the throbbing blob would change form a few times, and then, suddenly, the Priority Code Red Alert Signal would go out again: BACK TO THE RESTROOMS!

At times nearly all the party guests were engaged in high-level restroom conferences, leaving us

grownups virtually alone with the vegetable tray and the sound system, our eardrums torn to shreds, wondering if next year we should skip the function room and just rent two large restrooms.

At one point, as small groups of seventh-graders were streaming urgently past me in both directions, a young lady, clearly having been briefed by her parents on proper etiquette, stopped momentarily and said to me: “Hi I’m having a very nice time. So Far.”

The party lasted 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours, which is 46 years in chaperone time. Finally the parents came back and the music (thank God) stopped and the lights came back on and all these urgent dramatic figures turned back into seventh-graders, politely saying good night and leaving with their parents, going back to the boring old world.

Our son told us it was a good party. I kind of wished I had been there.