

## **"My Once Nice Kid is Now Very Mean!"**

**Many of the families that I work with had kids who were sweet, cooperative, and shy. Now they're distant, critical and unavailable. What are these kids thinking?**

**They're thinking that they need to develop some strength and there's no better place to test their strength out than on defying a parent or even hurting a parent.**

**Why would they need to hurt us? To prove that we will survive and to prove that they survive.**

**One of the blessings of being a rebellious teen is learning that you can be negative, aggressive, defiant, uncooperative, and hurtful and the world doesn't end. Your parents don't die and neither do you. That's an important lesson to learn.**

**Failing to learn that lesson makes you much more vulnerable to being manipulated and taken advantage of. It gives friends, lovers, and spouses far more power over your well-being than you should ever allow anyone.**

**So, if your temperament is such that you avoid conflict, you want to be liked, you have anxiety, depression or low self-esteem (not necessarily because your parents caused those things) then you need to learn how to rebel or be difficult at some point in your life in order to develop this crucial muscle.**

**Hard for parents, but most of the time, we're the gymnasiums where those muscles are developed.**

**So what are they thinking? Here are some common beliefs for this type of adult child:**

- I have to take care of everyone else**
- I can't tolerate conflict**
- If I have conflict, I'll have to pay too high of a price**
- I'm not strong enough to advocate for myself**
- People, my parents included, can't tolerate me being my own person**
- If I'm my own person, no one will like me**

- **If I hurt someone's feelings, they won't want to be close to me**
- **People, my parents included, are easily disappointed in me.**

**Why are these beliefs important for you to know? Because those are the beliefs that you have to address in your behavior and communication. You have to make it clear that you respect and admire your child's ability to make up his or her mind INCLUDING complaining about how you raised them. You have to let them know that you can tolerate and accept their discussing your weaknesses. That you want them to advocate for themselves. And that conflict is a normal and acceptable part of life.**