

Executive Activation



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At the age of 24, plus or minus 8 years, most young men are ready for what I have come to think of as *executive activation*. If you are related to an adolescent human male in any way, or if you have ever known or heard about one, you will have noticed that they sometimes appear to operate on a sort of primitive autopilot, without the obvious involvement of their higher cognitive faculties. By the time these young men are eligible for a driver's license or military service you may find yourself growing impatient with them or despairing of their chances for survival and happiness. It is time for them to fly into the world but they are watching television on your couch. Although they appear to understand you perfectly when you speak, they are impervious to your reasoning, your encouragement, your bribes, and your threats. You may

begin to wonder what you have done wrong and whether you can still fix it.

In fact, the indolence, aimlessness, inconsistency, and resistance that characterize male adolescence are all essential to the healthy development of his social independence, personal identity, and adult creativity. Seriously. These perplexing and irritating features of the adolescent male protect him from following the herd too closely while he is finding his own path. This can be a scary time and disaster is certainly one of the possibilities, but if not for this uncomfortable process you would never get him out of your house; which is the goal, after all.

Then suddenly, according to plan, the light goes on and you have a mature young man going about his business in the world. The executive activation that marks the end of adolescence consists of three important elements:

- A genuine recognition that you will not continue to take care of him forever;
- A genuine recognition that his own choices and actions actually influence the future;
- The discovery and adoption of a systematic personal process.

Although you cannot spark this post-adolescent activation before he is ready, you can facilitate it by helping him to a clear and explicit understanding of these things as far in advance as possible. Call me.

Relief, Recovery, Resolution

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