



## ***Wake Up and Touch the Roses***

by Joe Gandolfo

Each and everyone one of us is like a rose – unique and beautiful.

For us parents, the beauty and uniqueness of each of our children radiates intense love from our eyes and in our hearts from that first moment we hold them in our arms. The natural desire to love them, care for them, protect them, and offer them the world – burns in us all the days forward from that *first* moment.

They grow from infants, into toddlers, into children, into pre-teens, teens and young adults. The change is continual and constant!

Precious and innocent when they are young, these tiny humans are totally unaware of the complexity of this world we live in, and this world they are born into. We parents are continually challenged to adapt to these growing human beings – for the age of innocence and their early years are fleeting.

For a period of time they ask for such things as dolls, legos, bicycles, video games, hugs, snuggles and kisses. Then the day arrives for which they ask for cell phones, MySpace pages, cars, later curfews, “their space” and privacy.

The age of “*Innocence*”, seemingly overnight, turns into the age of “*What Is Going On Here?*” We as parents quickly are struck by the thorns which are part of the beautiful rose. Thus we must “wake up” as parents, so we can touch their lives in a positive, directional and supportive way!

The pre-teens and teens of today are racing toward or thru puberty – and that’s NOT ALL that is going on! These beautiful and unique roses are literally *flooded* with new and profound information and experiences – drugs, alcohol, crushes, dating, sexual references and overtures, bullying, negative thoughts about school, mass consumerism, media onslaught, to name a few. This *flood* of

information, images and experiences are overwhelming and difficult to digest, integrate and make sense of – resulting in confusion and a magnitude of choices which they are confronted with daily.

I am absolutely convinced that these beautiful and unique roses cannot lean on their peers to make sense of all of this in a healthy positive way. They need us parents and communities to engage them in conversation and provide direction and safety as they navigate this time of their lives so the *flood* does not destroy and kill their future, their potential and their opportunities.

We must reach out, grab and take care of these roses, knowing that the thorns are part of the whole. For if we never stop to even look at the rose, or only stand and observe a part of the rose – the beauty - afraid or uncertain of how to grab the rose, the *flood* will overwhelm their lives!

I myself am learning how to grab and handle *my roses* uncertain at times of just what to do or what to say, the only thing I am certain of is that I **MUST** engage ALL of the rose. I am discovering that if we engage, handle, care for and protect *our roses* they do seem to like it.

Listen to Joe's free daily podcast – ***Teen Success Radio*** – available on iTunes.  
His new book ***The Greatest Teenage Myth in the World*** is now available @ [www.JosephGandolfo.com](http://www.JosephGandolfo.com) or [www.TheGreatestTeenageMythInTheWorld.com](http://www.TheGreatestTeenageMythInTheWorld.com)

Joe Gandolfo is on a mission to ***champion the greatest commodity in today's world – our youth, teenagers, young adults and college students***, and to rally, strengthen and energize the adults – parents, educators, mental health professionals and organizations - who work with and care about our greatest commodity in the world.

Joe works as a ***professional speaker, success coach, seminar leader motivational counselor and author***. He brings 20 years experience working with youth, teen-agers, student-athletes, professional athletes, adults, parents, educators, public and private schools, organizations and associations.

**His clients have included:** *Georgia Tech Athletic Association, Rockdale County Schools, Cobb County Schools, Cobb Teen Leadership, YMCA, Childcare Resource Network, University of Clemson, University of West Georgia, PGA of America, Milwaukee Brewers, Coca-Cola, SouthCoast Hospitals, Owens-Corning and MPI Georgia Chapter.*

He has been an adjunct professor at Georgia Tech (1996-2000) and Georgia State (2005-06). He was on staff at the Homer Rice Center for Sports Performance (2000-07). He has had a private consulting practice since 1991.

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