

Nothing Euphoric About It



Zendaya might be your child's favorite actress, but her latest work is definitely not a kid's show. The former star of Disney Channel's *Shake It Up* is in an HBO production as far from Disney as you can get. It makes Netflix's pro-suicide series *13 Reasons Why* feel like an after-school special.

According to the description of *Euphoria* on HBO's website, this drama follows, "a group of high school students as they navigate love and friendships in a world of drugs, sex, trauma and social media."

Euphoria has more nudity than Game of Thrones and depicts what Hollywood considers "normal teenage struggles." In the pilot episode, there were two graphic sex scenes. One involved a teen choking another during intercourse, while the other showed a 17-year-old trans-female (bio-male) character raped by an older man with frontal nudity.

Despite the sex-saturation of the pilot episode, many viewers took to Twitter to praise the show for "not pulling its punches when depicting what modern teenagers have to go through."

These scenarios are hardly "typical" of teen life, but all it takes is one popular show to normalize them. Teens imitate what they see, not the other way around. Responsible adults are aware of this.

Even Zendaya herself posted on Instagram: "Just a reminder before tonight's premiere that *Euphoria* is for mature audiences... It's a raw and honest portrait of addiction, anxiety and the difficulties of navigating life today... There are scenes that are graphic, hard to watch and can be triggering. Please only watch if you feel you can handle it. Do what's best for you."

On the one hand, good for Zendaya for alerting her fans that *Euphoria* may not be appropriate. But sadly, the alert itself is an inducement to watch. *Please only watch if you feel you can handle it.* Can you imagine any teen you know saying, "All my friends have seen *Euphoria*, but I don't think I'm mature enough, so I'm not going to watch it"?

On Earth, that doesn't happen.

Which means, parents will do one of two things:

- Forbid, prohibit and block this show.
- Watch it yourself first and then (according to age) with your child. Immediately afterward, discuss at length what they're selling, how it depicts teens, sex and society, and how that lines up with your values.

Option "A" will resonate as protective, quick and easy. It is very likely what most parents will do. But parental censorship of *Euphoria* will also provide the motivation to watch it on someone else's screen, just so they can "fit in."

Option "B" will be awkward and unpleasant. Let's not sugarcoat it. If you watch *Euphoria*, you and your child will most likely have mental imagery that will not go away. That's the down side, and it's serious.

B. @bruff122
Look at McSteamy playing a perverted old man. This show is wild lol. #Euphoria #EuphoriaHBO

Matthew A. Cherry ✅
@MatthewACherry
This ain't Disney Channel. #Euphoria

(Nothing Euphoric About It, cont.)

However, there is a distinct possibility that your child will still see it **without your input**. And truth be told, you know teen entertainment isn't getting LESS sexual, offensive and graphic as time goes by. For all anyone knows, a year from now, shows like *Euphoria* may be considered "tame."

If your objective as a parent is to **help your child defend themselves when you're not there**,

then sitting next to them on the couch giving context to a sex-saturated show is a necessary training opportunity.

But there is one crucial point parents MUST NOT OVERLOOK: *Your revulsion, aversion, and disgust WILL NOT produce dopamine (stimulate the pleasure center of the brain.)* Remember dopamine is what engages the mechanism that creates new neural connections. The goal of watching together is not for YOU to point out how it harms, devalues or degrades others. It's to have a POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE dialogue. The objective is to provide a forum for **YOUR TEEN TO process what they see**. Your job is praising and encouraging **their ability** to identify how the show conflicts with or supports your family values. Your approval and respect in response to those observations will produce the dopamine.

For more information on what this conversation might look like, go to **PositivelyWaiting.com**, and click on "In The News."



COACH'S CORNER

Parents often tell us they have to either spy or interrogate to find out what is going on with their teens. Sometimes that's just the result of trying to fit an update in with your schedule. You have the time *right now* to catch up, but your teen resists the request for information. Teens say they feel respected when they can offer updates *voluntarily*, as opposed to being required to produce them on demand.

You can create the environment where this can happen if you are **available with predictability**. For instance, eating to dinner together. Touch base with each kid for 10-15 min. before bed. Even exchanges on the drive to or from school, if done right.

Try an innocuous conversation starter such as, "What was the best part/worst part (of the day, a sporting event, the weekend)?" Just listen. Follow it up with, "Tell me more about that" or "That sounds really difficult." Avoid judgment or correction, and it may get you some insights into their world.

It might take a few weeks or months establishing a pattern of availability before it produces fruitful dialogue. But enough routine and positive conversations, and your teen will start to look forward to them. Down the road, those "chat-times" will be the ideal opportunity to talk about challenges, worries or failures — the very information you want that you can't get on demand.

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