



The BRAVE System

How to Have A Happier Relationship
with your Teen in 5 Easy Steps



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By Elizabeth Lombardo, Ph.D.

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome!

You don't know it yet, but you made an amazing decision!

You are here because you are a parent of a teen. You love your child immensely, but maybe you don't always love being with them? I know, I can relate! As a mother with two teens, I am right there with you!

The purpose of this book is to share with you how you can have a happier relationship with your teen. Here, I will share with you how I have helped thousands of parents build an even better relationship with their teens (*and, NO, I am not going to suggest that you lock them up and throw away the key*).

You will discover my proprietary formula called **BRAVE** (*because, let's face it, you sometimes need to be brave when it comes to interacting with a moody teen*) that will help you and your teen get along even better. This works regardless of where you are now with your teen. Some clients already have a strong relationship with their teen and want to be closer. Others feel completely estranged from their child. No matter what your relationship is like now, when you apply the **BRAVE** system that I am going to share with you, you will become even closer with your teen.

Sound good?

As a mother of two teens, I have to tell you, I was feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and frankly sad when their teenage moodiness started to interfere with our relationship. The eye-rolling, the arguments, the lack of following through with tasks...

I knew there had to be a better way. **And I found it.**

And that is the **BRAVE** system that I will be sharing with you.

Not only has it helped me and my daughters be happier together, but it has also helped so many others.

Take Melissa, for example. She and her daughter would have all out shouting matches, ending in tears for both of them on a weekly and sometimes even daily basis. By applying the **BRAVE** system, in less than a week, things started to simmer down. Within a few months, screaming was no longer part of their household.

Michael felt like pulling his hair out every time his daughter gave him the eye roll. Step 3 of the **BRAVE** system saved his relationship – and his hair.

And then there is Caroline. Her son was locking himself in his room, refusing to talk, failing his classes and overall miserable, which made Caroline miserable. When she applied the 5th step of the **BRAVE** system, she told me, "My life literally changed for the better."

Pretty powerful stuff!

And that's why I decided to write this 5-Step Training, because it is tough being a teen, and it can be tough being a parent of a teen. Luckily there are tools you can use that will help you improve your relationship with your teen, not to mention help you be happier!

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How Are Things Going?

So, what are you dealing with when it comes to your teen that you wish was different?

- ✔ They won't get out of bed in the morning.
- ✔ They're moody.
- ✔ They won't listen.
- ✔ They won't help.
- ✔ They are rude.
- ✔ They are lazy.
- ✔ They don't do their homework.
- ✔ They obsess about their homework.
- ✔ They are always on their screens.
- ✔ They give one-word responses (*at best*) when you ask a question.
- ✔ Their room is disgusting.
- ✔ They talk back.
- ✔ They act entitled.

Can you relate to any of these?? If so, then you are in the right place.

The **BRAVE** system, which I personally created after working with clients for over 20 years, is a step-by-step remedy to all of these issues, and more.

I can't wait to share the **BRAVE** system with you because I know it is going to transform your life. But first, you might be wondering, "Why should I listen to her?" So let me take a few moments to briefly share my story.

Who is Dr. E?

I was a physical therapist when I decided to go back to school for psychology. Everything – from our physical health to our relationships, our self-confidence, how well we perform in school or work – is impacted by psychology.

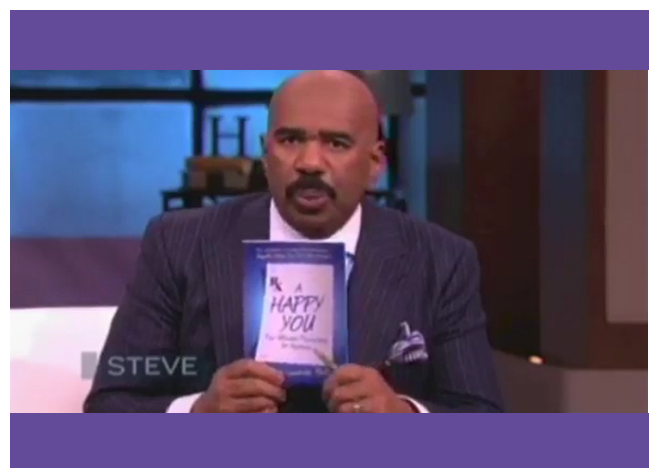


What goes on in our minds impacts everything that goes on in our lives. **EVERYTHING!** I remember during my first week of classes, madly taking notes as my professor was talking and thinking, "why do I have to get a Ph.D. in this? Everyone would benefit from understanding how their brain works and how to make it work for and not against you."

And so, I wanted to share this transformational information with the world. How? In addition to working one-on-one with a select group of clients, I also write books.

These include *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*

Better Than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love.



I even wrote a book on parenting called *From Entitlement to Intention, Raising Purpose-driven Children.*

And, despite being scared to death to speak in front of a crowd, I overcame that fear and started doing TV interviews. Maybe you have seen me on shows like *Today*, *GMA*, *Dr. Oz*, and *Steve Harvey*.



I have been quoted in tons of magazines like *Forbes*, *Success Magazine*, *Self*, *Women's Health*, *Men's Health*, *Health*, *Readers Digest* and a whole bunch more.



I was even the parenting editor for *Better Homes and Gardens* for two years when I had a monthly column offering parents concrete advice on how to overcome issues with their children.

I became a professional speaker, which has taken me around the globe. I even got to bring my daughters with me to Australia when I had a few speaking engagements there.

I see my role as scouring the research and sharing it in easily digestible bites so you, the people listening to me, can actually use it and benefit from it.

And it works.

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Being BRAVE Works!

I remember giving a talk once to a group of middle school parents. There was one mother who kept asking me questions and then telling me, "that would never work in my household." I politely suggested she try. With an eye roll of her own, she agreed. A few weeks later, I heard from her. "OMG, Dr. E, I never in a million years thought things could change in my house. But applying your strategies has literally transformed my relationship with all three of my teens. Thank you, thank you!"

Maybe you can relate, thinking there is no way things can be different. I have already tried! I am sure you have tried and tried very hard. But perhaps what you were doing was not the most effective approach.

My grandmother used to teach a college course that she called "How to play the piano despite years of practice." She would work with her students to get rid of less-than-helpful habits they developed, teach them proper skills and techniques, and then they would practice. And, as you can probably imagine, if you stop what isn't working, learn what does work and practice, you literally cannot help but get better. It is impossible *not* to get better.

Well, I like to think I help people be even better parents despite years of practice. It is not your fault that things are the way they are. You didn't have the insider information that I am going to share with you. It **IS** your opportunity to make them even better. And that is what we will be doing as you learn the **BRAVE** process.

How effective is the **BRAVE** process? Here is a message I received from a mom who learned it.

Attended a dozen parenting webinars in the past. Yours the only one that resonates and is effective. My dear, you are top of your field, and compassionate and caring to boot! Cannot wait to join this tribe and kick sass, disrespect, and rudeness to the curb! And take back my sanity!



Thank you for your kind words! Thrilled to be in this journey with you!

Pretty powerful stuff, huh?

What do you want?

If I had a magic wand, what would you wish when it comes to your relationship with your teen?

Here are some things I often hear parents with teens say when I ask them this question.

- I wish he would be respectful!
- I wish we could have a real conversation as opposed to me asking questions and him giving me one-word responses!
- I wish she was not so addicted to social media!
- I want my teen to be more responsible!
- I wish my children would stop fighting and get along!
- I just want some appreciation for all I do!
- I wish she would stop being so emotional!
- I really wish we did not argue so much!
- I beg him to stop gaming so much!
- I can't stand the complaining!

- I want my son to do his assignments without me needing to make sure he is doing them!
- Take a shower!

Some of the magic wand is geared towards teens. And some parents wish they could use it on themselves:

- I wish I didn't lose it.
- I wish I was good about following through with the consequences I established.
- I wish I didn't yell.
- I want to teach my teens important skills, but they won't listen.
- I wish I had more authority.
- I wish I could motivate him to be more engaged in his schoolwork.
- I wish I could help her see how amazing she is; she always puts herself down.

Maybe you can relate to any or all of these. I know I can.

And, the beauty is, the **BRAVE** system, which I have created to help parents like you have an even better relationship with your teens, can address all of these concerns.

Here's the deal. You don't need to get a Ph.D. in parenting or even years of your own therapy in order to have a better relationship with your teens.

I have broken it down into a 5-step revolutionary system that you can start to apply – and get the benefits – immediately.

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I know you are busy and don't have time to read a gazillion new books on parenting. And I know you have tried different approaches to get the changes you want to see in your child: asking nicely, raising your voice, offering a reward, maybe even begging. Your intention was positive: you just wanted your teen to be better behaved, more respectful, easy and even enjoyable to be with.

BUT, you did not get the results you wanted. And, really, it wasn't your fault. Until now, you did not have access to the **BRAVE** system. Luckily that all changes with this.

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The **BRAVE** system is something that I have created from working with clients for over two decades, sourcing the latest research and "practicing" the skills on a daily basis with my two teens.

How effective is the BRAVE system? Well, let me tell you about a client I worked with named Kim. Kim had three children: two teens and one tween. As she told me, "I thought it was tough when they were little, and I had to run after them. I figured things would get better when they got older. Boy, was I wrong."

One of her teens was struggling with academics. As Kim put it, "we argue almost every day about him doing his schoolwork. All he wants to do is play on his X-box. It drives me crazy." Kim's other teen was struggling with anxiety. Kim's daughter stressed out about taking tests, making friends and, really, doing anything. As Kim shared, "she cries all the time because she feels so overwhelmed. I told her it is not a big deal and everything will be fine, but she stresses out all the time."

Kim's tween, the youngest boy, would act out a lot. The jokester of the family, he often got in trouble at school and in his extracurricular activities because he was talking or doing something other than what he was supposed to do."

Kim came to see me because she was overwhelmed. "I have tried everything," she said. "And nothing works."

That is, until she used the **BRAVE** system.

The **BRAVE** system helps you improve your relationship with your child, no matter what is happening. The same **BRAVE** system helped Kim have a better relationship with all three of her children. The oldest one cut way back on his X-box. Her middle child had less anxiety. Her youngest stopped acting out so much. And Kim? Her stress level plummeted. During our last session, she told me, "For the first time in decades, I am actually sleeping well at night instead of stressing out about my kids."

Yep, that is the power of the **BRAVE** system.

Sound good to you?

So, what *IS* the **BRAVE** system? I am so glad you asked.

Drum roll, please.

BRAVE:

- **B:** Break out of the Red Zone
- **R:** Refrain from Making Them Wrong
- **A:** Avoid Personalizing
- **V:** Validate Over Educate
- **E:** End the "Shoulding" All Over the Place

That is the overview. Now, in next five chapters, we will go into details so you can discover tools that actually work to help you improve your relationship with your teen.

The BRAVE System

Step 1: Break Out of the Red Zone

The first step of the **BRAVE** system is: Break Out of the Red Zone.

What do I mean by that?

The Red Zone? It is a level of elevated stress.

Consider stress being on a continuum from 0 to 10 where zero is "no stress at all," and 10/10 is the most stressed out you have ever been. When we are at seven at ten or higher, we are in the Red Zone. And when we are in the Red Zone, we do not always act or think rationally.



Have you ever said something that you wish you hadn't? Or done something you wish you had not? If you are human, you probably have. And it is not because you are a bad person. It is probably because you were in the Red Zone.

Personally, as a parent, there have been times when I was a less-than-stellar model for my children. And each and every time, it was because I was overly stressed out.

The reason why the Red Zone is important when it comes to your interactions with your teens is that the higher level of distress you have, the more likely you see things in an adverse or gloomy way. Ever noticed how when you're

really upset, you tend to view people and events in a more negative light? What people do or say causes you more distress, even if they are things they do or say often. "Little" events can feel like colossal experiences. Well, there's a physiological reason for this.

When your distress levels are low, you're using more of your frontal lobe, which is the structure in your brain that differentiates you from other animals. It allows you to engage in problem-solving, see other people's perspectives, and use executive functioning.

So, for example, when your teen responds to you in a gruff manner, when you are at a low level of distress, you are more likely to brush it off. "Oh, he's just tired" or "She's has a bad day" might be your interpretation of their gruffness.

The higher-level distress you have, though, the less you use to see all different perspectives and the more you focus on the negative. And there is a physiological reason for this.

When you are experiencing high levels of distress, you use your frontal lobe less while at the same time use your limbic system more. Your limbic system is an area in the lower part of your brain that is responsible for things like fight or flight and emotional reasoning. So, instead of processing information rationally using your frontal lobe, when your limbic system is more in control, we tend to process information in more dreary ways.

When you are a seven or higher on the level of distress, you reach what I call the Red Zone. When we are in the Red Zone, we are usually not thinking 100% rationally.

Sidney was a mom of three who would yell at her kids when she got into the Red Zone. Then she felt incredible guilt, which increased her stress and made it more likely that she would lose it again.

As I always tell my coaching clients, "if you're at a seven or higher, don't let anything out of your mouth (*because that's when we say things we way to regret*). And don't let anything into your mouth (*because that's when we tend to consume things, we don't necessarily want to...*)."

So, have you ever been in the Red Zone? If you are human, I know you have.

And, just so you know, your kids are often in the Red Zone, too.

Currently, 80% of teens say they experience stress daily. (*American Psychological Association*)

67% report that they pretend to feel better to not worry anyone.

What's more, 70% wish their school taught them more about mental health and coping mechanisms. Instead, where do you think they are "learning" them? From social

media, from watching us (*not always acting at our best*),
and from their friends. Not necessarily optimal sources.



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Step 2: Refrain from Making Them Wrong

In the last chapter, we talked about the first step of the **BRAVE** system is Break Out of the Red Zone.

In this chapter, we are going to explore the second step of the **BRAVE** system R: Refrain from Making Them Wrong.

Yep, refrain from making them wrong.

"But Dr. E," you might be thinking, "they are wrong."

I know. Believe me, I know, our teens often think they know it all.

Unlike their silly parents who have no clue.

When I say Refrain from making them wrong, I do NOT mean give into their every whim, letting them stay out all hours, not do their homework or get to make the rules of the house.

What I do mean is don't make them feel wrong.

What do I mean? Let me share a story to help explain.

One Sunday morning many years ago, my husband and I were in church. Our church at the time was a rather festive one where singing with passion was encouraged. Upon sitting at the end of the song, I remember whispering to my husband that his breath was not all that

pleasant and offered him a piece of gum. Although he accepted the stick, I could tell he took offense to my attempts to help his breath. In all fairness, I was trying to be nice to those around us (*and me*) and was not trying to offend him.

The next Sunday, we were in a similar predicament, but I tried a new approach. This time when I smelled his breath, rather than make a comment about it, I simply offered him a piece of gum. He smiled, accepted the stick and thanked me.

After the service, we went out to lunch at Mo's, a favorite taco place. I could not help but ask why his reaction was so different this week (*much more favorable*) than the week before. "I was saying the same thing to you," I pointed out. "I know," he said, "but for some reason, it didn't offend me this time." Apparently, overtly telling him he had bad breath triggered some sense of judgment within him, but simply offering him a piece of gum (*even though he knew it meant "you have bad breath"*) did not trigger him. (*Yes, you can imagine what it is like to be married to a shrink...*)

By not making him feel wrong (in his mind), I was still able to get him to do what I wanted, and he felt positive about the experience.

The same thing can be applied to your teens.

The other day I was having a conversation with one of my daughters. She was upset about a teacher

who had given a time-consuming assignment that she was struggling to finish, and it was getting late at night. Of course, had my daughter started the project earlier, this probably would not have been an issue. However, at that point, she was stressed out. Making her "wrong" would have caused more stress and tension.

So, rather than point that out right then, I asked her how I could best support her. "Just let me finish," was her response. So, I went to bed. The following day, as she was getting ready for school, she told me, "I got it done. Next time I am going to start much earlier."

I didn't make her wrong, and she figured out what's right.



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Step 3: Avoid Personalizing

In this chapter, we are going to jump into the third step of the **BRAVE** system.

This one step helped my client, Michael, who felt like pulling his hair out every time his daughter gave him the eye roll, which was a frequent occurrence.

This step is the A in **BRAVE**, which stands for: Avoid Personalizing.

Avoid Personalizing.

What do I mean? I mean, when your teen does something that you wish they didn't (*or doesn't do something you wish they did*), do not make it about you.

Let me share an example of how personalizing can cause problems.

The first time I was ever on *Good Morning America*, we were talking about a new study that came out from AAA that found almost 80% of Americans admit to road rage. So about eight out of ten people get angry and aggressive when driving.

So, picture this. You are driving down the road, and someone cuts in front of you. You think, "Who do you think you are?! You think you are better than me!"

In fact, the driver is not even *thinking* of you. Not because you are not worthy of being thought of, but because they are so in their own world. It really is NOT personal.

So how does avoid personalizing play a role in your parenting? Let me tell you how it has been instrumental for me, personally.

Messy rooms. I would get upset, especially when I was already in the Red Zone. I would think things like:

- "They are being disrespectful."
- "They are being spoiled."
- "They think I am their maid."

When I stopped personalizing, I was calmer. I could remind them of what needed to be done and implement the consequences we had already established (*no phone until all items are off your floor*).

Ever notice how your children feed off of your energy? So when you are angry (*because you personalize their behavior*), they are more likely to act up, argue with you or avoid you altogether.

And, remember, our teens are stressed out to begin with.

80% of teens say they experience stress on a daily basis.

And 67% report that they pretend to feel better to not worry anyone. SO, your teen may be stressed out about something, but they are trying to pretend they are not. Of course, that stress comes out in other ways.

When my client Michael stopped personalizing his daughter's eye-rolling, he felt liberated. "I realize my reaction was making things worse. Now when she does it, I think, "she's just being a teen." And move on. I mean, I used to do it to my parents. I don't have to let it bother me. And when I stopped personalizing her behaviors, I was able to have more calm and constructive conversations with her about what needed to be done. Even better, because she felt more respected, she started actually doing what I wanted her to do and the eye-rolling went way down."

Avoid personalizing to help you stay out of the Red Zone, to help you have less stress so you can feel better and have better relationships with your teen.



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Step 4: Validate Over Educate

In this chapter, we are going to explore the V in the **BRAVE** system, which stands for: Validate Over Educate. That's right, validate over educate.

What do I mean?

Look, I don't have to tell you that teenagers don't always act the way you want or even think the way that makes sense to you.

And, there is actually a biological reason for that.

Teenagers process information differently than adults do. This is a time when your child is transitioning from being completely dependent on you when they were a baby to completely independent from you when they are an adult. And during this transition, there are lots of different hormones racing through their bodies. Teens tend to personalize other's actions, feel like they are the center of the universe ("*Everyone is staring at my zit.*") and have a whole lot of emotions that they usually don't know what to do with.

Their frontal lobe, the structure that differentiates humans from other animals, is not fully formed in teens. The frontal lobe is responsible for things like executive functioning, perspective taking, problem-solving. And the frontal lobe isn't fully developed until humans are in their mid 20's.

That does not mean you cannot hold your child responsible for logical thinking. It does mean logical thinking may not always come easily to your teen.

This is why your child may view something that seems not that big to you to be a huge deal. A breakup, not getting invited to a party, messing up during a performance, all of these can seem like catastrophes to a teen. **To a parent, we know that life will go on.**

And while we certainly want to help our teens keep things in perspective, there is a time and place to educate. Before you can do that, **IF** you want to have a stronger relationship with your teen, it is vital that you validate their feelings.

And in order to validate their feelings, you need to listen.

Yup. **Listen.**

Maybe when I say that, your reaction is what my client Wendy shared, "If I only listen, I cannot teach her. How will she ever learn?"

Here is a key that I want you to really absorb:

Your teen needs to feel heard before they can hear.

That's so good, I am going to say it again. **Your teen needs to feel heard before they can hear.** That means that they need you to listen to what they are saying before they can hear what you want to tell them.

They need to feel supported before they are open to learning from your wisdom. They need to feel validated as a human before they are willing to take a different perspective or try another approach.

And, don't worry, when I say "listen," this works for teens who talk a lot as well as those who don't. Sometimes offering empathy "Wow, this must be really tough" can be just the key to opening up doors (*and your teen's mouth*) to share even more.

When my client Wendy followed this coaching, she was amazed. As she told me, "when I kept my mouth shut and really listened from a place of empathy and no judgment, I was amazed at what she told me. And after she talked for a while, she literally thanked me. She **THANKED** me and then asked for my advice. I could never imagine that having happened before, even in my wildest dreams.

Ahh, the power of validate over educate!



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Step 5: End the "Shoulding" All Over the Place

In this chapter, we are exploring the last step of the **BRAVE** system.

This is the one step my client, Caroline, took. Her son was locking himself in his room, refusing to talk, failing his classes and overall miserable, which made Caroline miserable. When she applied this step of the **BRAVE** system, she said, "My life literally changed for the better."

Pretty powerful stuff!

So, what is this step? As you may recall, the E in BRAVE stands for: End the "Shoulding" All Over the Place.

What do I mean by shoulding all over the place?

When we use the word, "should" when assessing yourself, others, or a situation, it can signal that you're falling into the trap of the "should-ing". The word "should" is based on judging: judging how you think things should be, rather than how they are.

When we "should" on ourselves, we feel guilt and shame.

When we "should" on others, we often feel angry and resentful.

When we "should" all over ourselves and/or others, it is an indication that our "Rules" have been broken. You see, we all have certain rules about how we believe

people should act, think, be. Often times we are not aware of the rules per se, until they are broken. And when they are broken, that is when we often zoom into the Red Zone.

My client, Caroline, was doing both: shoulding on herself and someone else. First she was "shoulding" on her son, "He *should* be studying harder, he *should* be interacting with the family, he *should* be more talkative. And, as she told me, "that made me feel so upset that it put me into the Red Zone. Then I would yell at him. Of course, I felt bad about yelling, so I was shoulding all over myself that "I *should* be a better mother; I *should* control my temper. And that made me even more upset.

"When I stopped shoulding, I stopped judging him. And me. Not only did I feel better, but he responded to my new attitude. Yesterday he actually came down and told me about how well he did on his math test. I nearly fell out of my chair!"

End shoulding all over yourself and others to boost your relationship with your teen.

So, let me ask you this, where are you shoulding all over the place? With yourself? Your teen? Your partner? A colleague?

A word of warning ... A lot of clients tell me, once they learn about shoulding, they notice how often they say it – out loud or inside themselves. So you may start to be

even more aware of how often you are shoulding on yourself and others. And that is a good thing because only then can you change it.



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Congratulations on Being BRAVE

So, that's it. The **BRAVE** system is just five basic steps:

- **B**: Break out of the Red Zone
- **R**: Refrain from Making Them Wrong
- **A**: Avoid Personalizing
- **V**: Validate Over Educate
- **E**: End the "Shoulding" All Over the Place

Don't let these fundamental principles confuse you. Just because they are basic, it does not mean they are simple. Nor does it mean they are not powerful.

I have a saying, "It is not rocket science, but it is rocket fuel." By this, I mean, you don't need an IQ of 180 to grasp these concepts. They are fundamental.

And yet, they are rocket fuel, meaning they can take you from wherever you are to wherever you want to go.

Apply the **BRAVE** system in your life. And enjoy the benefits.



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Being a teen is tough. So is being a parent of a teen.

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed as a parent?

Do you wish you were closer with your teen?

Do you ever feel frustrated with your teen or wish they would act differently?

If so, you are not alone.

Join a group of like-minded parents who want to raise purpose-driven teens.

Learn immediately useful tools to improve your relationship with your teen.

You don't have to do this alone.

Special offer: Trial membership exclusively for parents who are BRAVE!

Go to www.EleViveParentsClub.com/trial today!

JOIN ELEVIVE PARENT'S CLUB!



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