

Walkin' The Talk Teen & Family Courses



...World Peace Begins IN Me

P.O. Box 1345, Boise ID 83701-1345 (208)395-0900 Fax: (208)395-0200 Email: walkintt@aol.com

WHAT DO OUR CHILDREN REALLY WANT?

If we want to develop healthy self-esteem in our children, it's important that we let them be honest with us about some of our parenting styles. What if we were open to hear the truth about both the negative and the positive behaviors we tend to recycle from our own beliefs and upbringing? The parenting days of "do as I say and not as I do" are over. Our actions deliver a much louder message than our words, and that's the one our children are hearing and even mirroring. Our schools should not have to take up the slack due to our obsolete parenting techniques, so let's work on our communication skills together.

In Walkin' The Talk leadership workshops for teens, young people have a safe place to exchange honesty with each other about their own self-destructive attitudes and behaviors. It's an interesting dynamic when a teen can actually receive and "hear" constructive feedback from a fellow teen, yet he may struggle to hear that same honesty from an adult. Perhaps it's a similar roadblock for an adult sharing honesty with a teen. Have we taught them to be defensive because we are? Here are some heart-felt requests from some young people, as they privately and anonymously wrote about what they "want more of from their parents." If we listen carefully, we might hear one of them speaking to us.

"Dear Mom,

Boy, 16

I understand that you only want the best for me, and try to protect me from the bad things. But you need to learn to let go, to listen to what I have to say and to just be there when I need you. To be open and trustworthy, to be able to talk is what I ask. No matter what I will always love you

"Dear Dad,

Boy 10

Please don't yell at me when I try my best at something."

"Dear Mom,

Girl 15

Sometimes I do bad things because I want your attention."

"Dear Mom and Dad,

Girl 11

What I would like the most, is to spend more time with us."

“Dear Mom and _____,

Boy 12

I love you very much. What I would like from you is your honesty when I’m grumpy. Your love when I’m down. And your support when I’m struggling. I hope I turn out just as well as you did. Thank you for teaching me and loving me.”

“Mom,

Girl, 11

Sometimes when I come home in a sad or mad mood, I would like you to ask me what’s wrong or how do I feel instead of just not asking me anything at all and give me more LOVE.

Dad,

What I want more from you is more time so I could just be with you and not only see you at least four times a week. It may not be easy but try if you could.”

“Dear Mom and Dad,

Boy, 18

What I would like more of from you guys. . . I will never get that chance because I am grown up, but what I want for my little brother and sisters is love. I want you to touch them more and support them. Be there for them when they need you. Tell them you love them even though it doesn’t seem much. ‘I love you,’ those very words that I never heard destroyed my childhood. The absence of those words killed my heart, the loving heart that I have always had. So start somewhere, soon!! Don’t kill your children.”

“Dear Mom,

Girl, 10

I would like you to spend more time with me and not yell, just ask me nicely to do something or just go sit somewhere quiet and just think about it, then we can all talk about it as a family.”

“Dear Mom,

Boy, 16

I would like you to listen to me more and have an open mind about things. I want you to try to understand more of my problems.”

“Dear Dad,

Girl, 10

I would like more time with you. For you to listen to me when I call out.”

“To Mum and Dad what I want from you is leadership, reliability, being there. Giving me responsibilities that challenge me and promote all the good tools I need for life. I would also like to have your trust I think that is important. Also please never give up on me.” Boy 18

“Dear Mom,

Boy, 10½

When I come home pist off, just give me some time alone, please.”

“Mom,

Girl 15

I love you very much! I hate when you assume things or don't trust me. I hate when you bitch about nothing and just because you are having a bad day. I also hate how you accuse me of things. I hate how you are not open with me and when you try to make me make up for your mistakes.

I appreciate the things you do for me and how you're always there for me.

I'm sorry for all the pain I've caused you and hurt. I LOVE YOU.”

“Dear Mom and Dad,

Girl 12

What I wish more from my mom is more time as a family. From Dad is so that I can spend more time with him and do more things.”

“Dear Mom and Dad,

Boy 10

I wish you wouldn't yell or spank me. Just talk it over, please.”

“Dear Mom and Dad,

Boy 15

I love you both very dearly, but there are some things I would like you to know. What I would like from you as parents is one small word: trust. Simple, wonderful trust. It doesn't mean you have to let me loose to do whatever I feel like it. It simply means that you need to let me make some stupid mistakes of my own. You tell me over and over not to speed or do drugs, and you always have a story about 'someone you knew' whose life was ended by a car accident or drug overdose. But it's not the same as me learning from personal experience. I would like more open discussions with you where no topic is taboo. I need to know, and if I don't hear it from you, who will it be?”

“Dear Dad,

Girl 16

I would like to be listened to. Not just to be told that your listening but to actually apply or think about what I have told you. It is so simple and yet so important that you don't just zone out! I need you to hear me and support me. I also want you to understand that when I give 100% and it's not good enough for you, it hurts. I try to live up to your perfect standards but that's as good as I can do. I can't give you more than my all. That is it take it or leave it.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to tell you that you're not right all of the time. The universe does not revolve around you and your needs. You were the one who became a father so act like one and put your family first. If you expect us to grow up well you need to father us well! You don't always have to yell to get your point across. We can hear you as well if your just talking in a normal tone of voice.

I hate it when your rude, mean or you make fun of other people. It's so rude and awful to do or say anything against another human-being. You don't like it when other people do it to you so how do you think they feel. It's as if you are in a world that consists of only you. You don't care about those around you as much as you do for yourself. When you do care you never show it. It's as if your real self is locked away somewhere else and I can't reach it. It's like I'm hugging a shell with nothing inside.

It's hard to grow up without a father. I know because it seems like your never there. Even when your back from work it seems that your not at home. I wish I could feel your love and compassion. I want to talk to you and have you listen. LOVE, your daughter"

"Dear Mom,

Girl 9

What I want from you is a lot more hugs and kisses. Another thing is for you to keep your promises."

Dear Dad,

"What I want is for you to stop smoking. Another thing is for you to talk to me looking me straight in the eye!"

"I want you to listen to me" is such a resounding plea from our young people, for all of us. We just want to be heard, recognized and acknowledged, which doesn't mean we all have to agree with each other. Like so many of us were taught when our judgment seemed to be growing against another, "Walk a mile in his shoes," or "can you look at it from his eyes?" Just having someone listen becomes the first step in showing someone we care.

Our children are also asking for our time, and when it gets right down to it, the new pair of Nike's aren't even on the list. If we can exchange honesty with our children, especially at a calm time, we can hear each other's needs. In turn we will all be more willing to listen to each other, so we can support and actually coach one another. In the exchange of honesty, we gain courage, compassion, love and respect, which makes us stronger and brings us closer together. Isn't that what we really want from our relationships, especially with our children, the strength to endure the tests of time?

By Sue Billington-Wade who is the lead facilitator for Walkin' The Talk Teen Courses, a non-profit company devoted to the personal growth, integrity and self-esteem of our young people. She has over 20 years experience in elementary, secondary and collegiate teaching and coaching. After nine years in public schools, she supervised secondary student teachers for eight years at Boise State University. Her undergraduate degree and secondary administrative certificate are from The College of Idaho. She has an M.S. from Idaho State University and has completed advanced graduate work at Boise State. Sue is a certified self-esteem trainer from Jack Canfield's ([Chicken Soup for the Soul](#)) 1997 & 1998 seminars and she was selected to staff the 2000/2001 seminar in Santa Barbara, CA. Her favorite occupation is being the mom of her teenage son and listening to the concerns and dreams of our young people.