

John Coleman

Why won't my teenager talk to me?

Why this book?

- The title
- The topics
- Something different – a new framework
- The burning questions
- Where next?

The title

- Talking is at the heart of family relationships
- Somehow this is what breaks down
- Parents seem at a loss over how to communicate
- So many of the problems seem to relate to this
- Talking Teens workshops

“Do you find it difficult to communicate with your teenager?”

“I would say yes. Because you ask them to do something and they don't want to do it. It's not actually the words that are used, but what is meant by them. They just turn you off after a while. That's lack of communication itself. They think because you're older you're trying to put your point of view across to them. They don't like that. I don't think any teenagers listen to their parents' advice.” (Father of one son).

*" I don't know if my children find it hard to communicate with me, or if it wouldn't be more honest to say they don't really wish to communicate with me terribly. I don't feel I have difficulty in communicating with them, I just have difficulty in stopping them for five minutes to be prepared to listen to me while I communicate with them as they are not terribly interested. I get them in a corner and say: Will you listen to me because I consider this is really important!"
(Mother of two daughters).*

*“I think they get what would seem to be negative attention. You’re telling them off because, you know, you’ve told them five times before, and they’ve got you focussed on them, and it plays on your emotions far more than it does on theirs. Because to them you’re wrong, you know nothing, you don’t understand, and so they’re not listening. Whereas I think: why have I not been able to hold a conversation, argue my point, get them to see my way and get an outcome?”
(Father of three).*

“The main thing I’ve learnt about it is that sometimes I just have to wait till he wants to come to me rather than keep going on about the issues. Now I say to him: I’m here for you if you want to talk. We’re actually going through a good time now, but before I went on the course I really thought I need this here, because we seem to be constantly arguing.”

“Just by breathing I seemed to be annoying him, that’s the only way I can put it. I could say to him: How was your day? or whatever, and he goes: What are you talking about?! He was just so defensive, or even silly things about the house, I actually said to him, you know, by breathing I seem to be annoying you, or even if I didn’t speak it was a look.”

(Mother of one son).

Teenagers do want to talk

- Of course teenagers will talk, but not necessarily at the time the parent wants.
- They will talk when they feel safe
- They will talk as long as they feel they will be heard
- They will talk as long as it is not an interrogation
- They will talk once they have sorted things out in their own minds.

The topics in the book

- The STAGE framework
- Health
- Sex
- Friends
- Digital world
- Divorce and family change
- Risk-taking and challenging behaviour

Something different – a new framework

- STAGE, a new framework
- Why a new framework?
- What basis can we use for this?
- What should it contain?
- How can it be easy to remember and easy to use?

“That’s the thing I’ve looked and learnt from the course, you know, that this is just a thing they’re going through, you know what I mean, they’re not really trying to annoy you, and they’re not trying to be really bad, or anything specifically about you.”

(Mother of two teenagers).

“At the end of the day you’re just glad they’ve got their health. Yes, we have issues with him, but I am reassured that they come out the other side. It’s a work in progress, isn’t it? You have these highs and lows, these extremes, but everyone tells me they do come out the other side, at least I’m hoping so!”

(Father of two sons)

“The main thing I took from the course was, this doesn’t last forever. There will be an end. There will be an end and I often look at him and I realise this is the part of life that is confusing for him as well. Something I really took from the course was I’m going: He’s a good boy really, doing his best in a way, he’s not really bad, and this is just a stage he’s going through, and I cannot take it personally, it’s not against me.”
(Mother of one son).

STAGE

- S – Significance
- T - Two-way communication
- A - Authority
- G - Generation gap
- E - Emotion

What's the point of STAGE?

- A handle to hang things on
- An approach that has a basis in research findings
- Sending a message that it is not all a mystery
- That there are ways for parents to become resilient
- That whatever hassle and stress there is, it won't last for ever!
- **THAT PARENTS MATTER!**

Limitations

- STAGE cannot cover everything
- It may seem to some to be simplistic
- It is not a box of tricks
- It is not a set of strategies or tactics
- It is not a magic bullet!

Burning topics

- The brain
- Sleep
- Technology
- Mental health

Where next?

- Public education
- Involvement of schools
- Involving the media
- A recognition that this is a central problem for parenting/human development
- Addressing the bias in “early intervention”
- Getting the message across that parents of teenagers matter!

THANK YOU

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