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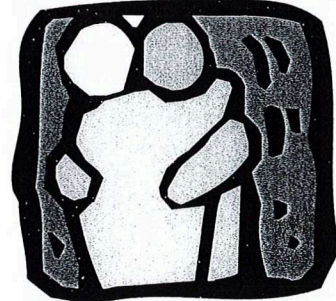
# Relationships

Greg Powell  
School Counsellor

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Pacific Hills Christian School.

## You know that I love you...don't you?

*Will someone please tell my teenager that it's true!*



*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.*

*But the greatest of these is love*

*- 1 Corinthians 13:13*

**'I hate my parents and they hate me'**

**'They say they love me but they sure don't show it'**

Sometimes when I talk with teenagers I hear comments such as these and I used to think that it was just another phase of the rollercoaster. I had always known that there were some parents who probably didn't love their teenagers (sad but true) but what I hadn't realised was that there was also a significant group of parents who did love their teenagers but didn't know how to communicate that love.

Dr Scott P. Sells, in his book 'Parenting your out-of-control Teenager' talks about reclaiming the love between a parent and a teenager and he highlights some of the parental behaviours that undermine the development of this relationship. He lists the following 5 toxic parental behaviours.

**1. Bringing up the past.**

This is considered to be one of the number one complaints made by teenagers about their parents.

**2. Attacking the person rather than the behaviour.**

**3. Making compliment sandwiches.**

Compliments that contain a 'but'. For example, 'I can see that you are trying BUT you can do better'

**4. Intimating that the teenager must be good to earn your love.**

Letting bad behaviour influence the degree of love and affection that is given.

**5. Offering no opportunities to regain trust.**

Teenagers will make mistakes but it is important that opportunities to regain trust are given. Without trust, there is no reason for teenagers to try any more.

This may seem like a list of things not to do and that's because I guess it is. It is, however, definitely not a 'point the finger/take the blame' exercise but more of an opportunity to reflect on the relationship you have with your teenager. Go on, do an honest assessment. If you're unsure whether or not you do any of the above then ask someone who could tell you - maybe even your teenager (if you're game!)

When I hear teenagers describing what looks like a

communication breakdown with their parents I try to encourage students to take the initiative in restoring this relationship. I give them a few suggestions of things they could do and sometimes they take the challenge. It isn't often that I get the opportunity to give these ideas to parents and so here are a few of those suggestions.

**1. Take your teenager out on a date.**

No stress, something that you think they might enjoy.

**2. Hugs.**

The research is in and it says that physical touch is more powerful than we often think.

**3. Leave small notes of affirmation hidden around for your teenager to encounter.**

On the bathroom mirror, in their school books, on their phone (you could even try SMS!)

**4. Share something personal with your teenager each day.**

It could be a need, a feeling, something painful, an insight or a victory.

**5. Communicate an open door communication policy.**

Does your teenager know that they can talk to you about anything and that nothing is off-limits?

**6. Eat meals together.**

This is a tradition that has been seriously challenged by troublemakers like televisions, computers, phones etc...

Now you may already be doing some of these but it is time to be extravagant (If you have some other tried and true ideas then please let me know. Share the love!). Some of you might tremble with fear at the thought of attempting some of these and that is okay, no-one ever said it would be without risks or potential injuries. We are all aware that growth can be painful and sometimes the teenage years can appear to be a confusion tornado, but I am convinced that all we offer as guidance, correction and comfort must be built upon a foundation of love.

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass, or a clanging symbol.*

*- 1 Corinthians 13:1*

Are you ready for the challenge? Go on, what do you have to lose?