



Questions Every Parent Should Ask Their Child

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The summer is here and in our home, we use this time to regroup. It is amazing how quickly a school year passes.

For our family, the race begins in September and we don't slow down until June. We are all running at a fast pace and barely have time to think.

My oldest son just became a teenager and the conversations that we used to flow easily, seem to require more effort. I was unsatisfied with the distance between us and decided to take him out for lunch.

I wanted to ask him questions about his day, and his school year and get solid answers. Not the typical, "fine" he gives me when I ask how his day was. I figured if I didn't ask the questions, he certainly wasn't going to offer up the information.

Before our lunch date, I wrote a few questions. I literally wrote them out on a piece of paper because I was planning on keeping my phone in my purse and asking my son to keep it at home or in his pocket.

I didn't want to sound like I was interrogating him, but I felt that these questions were long overdue.

What was the high point and low point of your day?

This question is deeper than just asking how your child's day was. It makes them think about what they experienced during the day. Highlighting something they are proud of. The low point can open the door to discussing something that they may feel overwhelmed with or something they can improve upon the next day.

Do you feel safe?

I made the false assumption that my son always felt this way. He lives a pretty sheltered life. He goes to the same school where his father is a teacher; he knows everyone in our neighborhood. But I just wanted to ask. After a few minutes, he told me that someone he rides home with from lacrosse made him nervous about her driving. I would have had no idea that this particular person has a tendency to speed had I not asked. I assured him that he didn't need to ride with her anymore. I hope it also made him realize that he can come to me whenever he feels this way in the future.

Are you happy?

I have suffered from mental illness in the past and I wish someone would have asked me this question when I was younger. Of course, people have ups and downs, but if he or she feels sad for no reason, it may be a sign that they are depressed. For an adolescent, it can be really hard to articulate exactly what that feels like. If anything, it can open up a conversation that could help save a life in the future.

What do you love most?

The answer to this question surprised me. I thought that at the top of his list would be the things he does most, like playing games on his phone. But he said he loves time with his friends. He also loves the time when our family is all together. With this knowledge, I know that his friends and family are important to him, and will think about this next time he asks to have friends over.

All of these questions open a dialogue that otherwise could have remained closed. It can also be adjusted for the age of the child.

Although I am with my children every day, I realize that I don't spend enough time listening to what they have to say. As an adult, and their mother it is my job to take care of them. Not just physically but emotionally and spiritually as well. All it takes is a little time and the right kind of questions.