

Your Kids Want to Talk to You

Dr. Marlo Archer

http://www.drmarlo.com/?page_id=55

I have worked with hundreds of teenagers, both boys and girls, and I find the following to be almost universally true – Whatever it is that they're talking to me about, they really wish they could talk to their parents about it instead. They also always say roughly the same thing right after that. They add, "I can't talk to my mom or dad about this, they'd just freak out and keep me in the house for the rest of my life." That is, they want to talk to their parents about sex, drugs, alcohol, not going to college, joining the military, getting married, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, oral sex, smoking cigarettes, being gay, or even just being in love, but they feel that they cannot or they will jeopardize their freedom to socialize outside the home. That socialization is so important to them that they would rather risk entering risky situations without parental input rather than put their social time in danger of being revoked.

I cannot tell you how many weeping young ladies have discussed with me the difficult decision of whether or not to have sex, all the while wishing they could be talking to their own mother who was probably sitting 50 feet away in the waiting room, or at least had sent the check along that was paying for the gal's session. Likewise, I have discussed condoms and AIDS with many young men who would really have been more comfortable talking with their own fathers, but who also said their fathers would probably die of embarrassment trying to talk about condoms.

Parents, what I'm trying to say is that YOUR KIDS WANT TO TALK TO YOU. However, in order for them to be able to talk to you, you have to be able to listen to them. By listening, I mean *really* hearing them, not judging them, not interrupting, not offering your advice, not telling them what to do, just listening. They want to bounce their own ideas off of you, not hear your ideas. They've heard your ideas for over a decade. They know what your ideas are. What they need to do is figure out what their own ideas are

and they want you to help them by listening and possibly offering some limited feedback, if they ask you for it.

If you absolutely cannot bring yourself to listen to them in a way that allows them to be open with you, then do be sure to hook them up with someone like me because when they don't even have me to talk to, they get their information from their friends and I'm really thinking you don't want one 15 year-old coaching your 15-year old on decisions that carry major consequences.