

AoW #4

Words to know:

authenticity: being genuine, truthful, honest

adolescents: teenagers

intimate: friendly, affectionate

Open parent-teen relationship helps mental health, studies say

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By Rosemary Campbell, Deseret News

A [new study](#) researching the effect of relationships on depression in teenagers has found that the authenticity of parents' relationships with their children is a large factor in their sons' and daughters' mental health.

"Teenage girls have long been identified as experiencing depression more frequently than boys, but the data from the study shows that authentic, honest relationships affects both genders," freelance writer Holly Rossi reported about the study's findings on parenting.com.

Sally Theran, a psychologist at Wellesley College who led the study, wrote that because recent research has indicated that authentic, intimate relationships have a big impact on boys as well as girls, she decided to delve deeper into the question. "The current study demonstrated that the relation between authenticity in relationships and depressive symptomatology was similar for boys and girls," Theran said in the report. "This finding suggests the continuing importance of parents in adolescents' lives, and is consistent with previous research demonstrating that adolescents' parental relationships are the best predictor of well-being."

Today, communication plays a large role in the parent-teenager relationship, and at least 75 percent of teenagers in the U.S. have a cell phone, reports the New York Times. While contact with your children is important, the type of communication happening via cell phone is just as important, Robert S. Weisskirch, professor of human development at California State University, found in a paper researching how cell phones affect the parent-child relationship. "What I found generally was that when adolescents are initiating the communication and are seeking out social support and guidance from their parents, then almost across the board they tend to have better reports of getting along with their parents,"

Weisskirch told the New York Times. "When the parents call and have a lot of communication around 'what are you doing?' or 'who are you with?' or when they're angry at the child and upset or scared, the kids report more conflict in the family."

A. Rae Simpson, program director for Parenting Education and Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believes a parent's relationship with their teenager is delicate, and handling it is an issue with a lot of research and much disagreement. "Requiring moment-by-moment judgment calls, teens need an environment that provides opportunities for experimentation at certain times but not others; for privacy on some matters but not others; for peer influence in some areas but not others; and for negotiation and decision making on some issues but not others," he reported in a [2001 Harvard research project](#). But his research ultimately agrees with that of Theran. "Throughout, (teenagers) need parents to remain available, taking the emotional high ground by providing opportunities for closeness that teens can sometimes accept and sometimes reject," Simpson said.

Theran's research suggests this relationship between a parent and a child is what influences depressive symptoms more than any other type of relationship, Rossi reports. Although peers are an important aspect of adolescent development, parents have a distinct ability to impact their children's mental well-being and prevent negative development. "I'd encourage parents to keep open lines of communication with their children — and yet remember that they are authority figures, not friends," [Theran](#) said. "Clearly, teenagers who could be open and honest with their parents benefited by having fewer depressive symptoms."

Questions to consider:

1. In the novel, [Things Fall Apart](#), what type of relationship does Okonkwo have with his children, especially Nwoye and Ikemefuna?
2. How would you cite this article?
3. What is the main idea of this article?
4. What evidence supports the main idea?