



*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
~Psalm 34*

Hello Parents,

The three-day weekend was lovely, wasn't it? I am a big fan of beach weather in winter! It seems like we always get a couple of spectacular weeks in January, where the days are warm, the sunrises and sunsets are surreal, and the night skies are bright with stars. I'm so glad Rusty gets me out into all the beauty multiple times a day.

In the last letter, I talked about how much our kids change throughout their development, sometimes in shocking ways. It's one of the beautiful mysteries in loving and raising children.

This week, I want to talk about navigating our child(ren)'s disappointments. It's one of the most painful and challenging parts of parenthood, in my opinion. When our kids are crushed, hurting, or dejected, we feel it deeply. Sometimes the pain is so intense we can barely stand it - we wonder how our kids can get through it without permanent damage.

If your tween or teen is suffering painful social dynamics, setbacks in their sport, an unrequited crush, struggling academically, or... fill in the blank, they'll experience disappointment, which can manifest in a variety of ways - irritability, defensiveness, anger, withdrawal, comfort eating, sadness, sleep disruption, negativity.

When teens are low, the whole family can usually feel it; it's not much fun! My Dad used to tell me that it was like a black cloud had descended over the house when I got home. He could *feel* my stormy mood!

When we know our teen is disappointed, it's a gut punch to us. We feel hurt for them! Sometimes we're even outraged if we perceive they've been wronged. We often want to rush in and fix it. We all know this doesn't work very well, but it's hard to hold back.

If we can keep an open posture and offer to *just listen*, oftentimes they will share what's happening. Only then can we look at our options for supporting them best, which sometimes means our involvement, but most times doesn't.

One astute teen that I asked said this, "When I'm truly disappointed or upset, I need to talk it out and realize that I know more than I thought I knew. I know I will figure things out if I can say it all

and vent; I feel really frustrated if people try to tell me how I *should feel* or what I *should think* about it. I want to sort it out myself and just be comforted.”

Another student said, “It’s the absolute worst when a parent yells at you when you’re already disappointed. It’s like, great, I’m sad, and now you’re mad. Not helpful.”

Simple, comforting phrases like “Oh, honey, that really stinks”, or “Gosh, that’s truly disappointing, and I’m so sorry”, can go a long way. It doesn’t feel like we’re doing anything, but we are; we’re helping our teens process and understand their emotions, something they will need to be able to do for the rest of their lives. When we demonstrate that *we can handle* all that they’re feeling, without falling apart or blowing up, we are teaching them.

If they don’t open up, you can offer comfort in other ways. A hand on the shoulder when you pass, a comforting tea or hot chocolate while they’re studying, a little love note on the bathroom mirror. Or, you might say, “Hey, it seems like you’ve had a rough day; anything I can do to help?”

Our teens are sure to give some mixed messages when they’re upset. Come close, go away! You may feel confused about how to best support them. When in doubt, a quiet and loving presence is almost always helpful. Even a text saying, “I’m here if you need me” can show you care. If they need more, they may indicate it.

What are your thoughts? Is it tricky to comfort your teen? How do you like to be comforted when you’re hurting and disappointed?

I love your feedback and questions, so stay in touch!

Warmly,

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