

Episode 7: Butting Heads - Why We're At Odds With Our Kids (Category: Parenting)

SETUP: Does it ever seem like your kids are purposely refusing to listen to you out of sheer stubbornness? Or maybe they went from wanting to be with you non-stop to wanting never to be seen with you – like drop me off two blocks from the school and I'll walk the rest of way, as if your presence would be repulsive to their friends.

STORY: Well, maybe it's not that bad, or maybe it's worse for you.

(RAY) Growing up, I remember a few major clashes with my parents as a teenager. One that stands out was with my mom. I honestly don't recall what we fought over, but I remember it was bad enough that she told me I had to leave... I was probably 13 – so she grabbed my stuff, set it outside and I waited for my dad to come and pick me up – I didn't go back for a while.

(CAROL) I honestly don't remember many arguments with my parents, but do I have a vivid memory of my mom sending me to my room when I was probably 3-4 years old. We had an old house with a strange layout, and there was a steep, narrow staircase off the kitchen that lead up to my bedroom. I remember I standing at the top of those stairs, I looked down at my mom with my hands on my hips and said, "I don't like you very much right now." My mom responded with, "I don't like you very much either."

If you've ever had problems with your parents or kids, do us a favor and click that like button, leave us a comment with what you're facing and make sure as always to subscribe and hit the bell to get notified of future episodes.

PROBLEM: There has always been a tension between parents and their children. One of the main issues at hand revolves around agendas – mainly that our agendas are different than our kids. So how do we have harmony with different agendas?

I know it's shocking, but your kids don't want the same things for themselves as you want for them.

- Our kids are convinced that life would be great if they lived off a steady diet of Dr Pepper & Takis – mom would like them to mix in a vegetable into the daily nutrition plan
- We want our kids to clean their room, they want to get back on the XBOX (btw, our definitions of clean are drastically different)

And lest you think that we as parents are perfect saints and we only want the best for our kids, there are times when we just want our kids to be quiet and go away

- We want to sit down to relax and watch Netflix, they want to do a family night and play games

This is our situation. We get caught in the argument of agendas.

SOLUTION

This is very much one of those episodes where we don't have it all figured out. Our kids are great, but we still go at it from time to time. But we want to share 4 things that have helped more recently.

Be Engaged, Not Overbearing

As kids grow older, they tend to want to venture into newfound freedom – but that doesn't mean they don't want or need structure and care

- In fact, even though most kids fight against structure, they tend to later appreciate it
- Engagement comes from clear structure that creates boundaries – it's within that structure our kids we find freedom, love & safety
- Overbearing parents to the opposite – they create situations filled with pressure to perform
 - For example, it isn't your child's responsibility to be your best friend, they're your kid – it's not their job to make you feel fulfilled – imagine the pressure that puts on them

- Overbearing parents often try to live vicariously through their kids –
 - Think of some moms at weddings - extorting child – sad

Again, engagement looks different depending on your child's age, but it's just as valuable no matter their age

- What's hard for us as parents is navigating transitions to greater levels of trust in our kids
 - Think about being in a parking lot – when they're babies or toddlers, you carry them
 - You may hold the hand of your pre-schooler, but by the time they are in third grade, you can let them walk, but you'll still keep an eye out
 - Eventually, they can walk by themselves without supervision and even more, they can help others walk
- Kids will constantly pull their hand away b/c they think they're ready – your job as their parent is to figure out when is the right time to let go
 - And remember, this is what's best for your child
 - In our frustration we may let go too soon
 - In our fear we may hold on too long

Btw, you won't always nail this, so there will be times when you let go too soon and have to take it back to keep them safe – it can be hard to do, but sometimes is necessary

Lastly, a note to us as parents – all this sounds good, but it's hard when you see your child, no matter their age, as your baby – it's just a unique part of being a parent

- Just remember that you don't have to be overbearing to stay engaged – this will help alleviate friction in the relationship

Another great way to deal with differing agendas comes when we **Take Time To Listen** – what are your kids really trying to say?

By the way, they may not always say things through words – I know sometimes the best we get is a “huh?” or a “what?” or maybe some sort of grunt – especially out of the older kids

- Not every child is able to clearly articulate what they feel – in fact, they often can't fully understand everything – but, the question I want you to think about mom, dad, is when they do share, do they feel heard
 - That doesn't mean you need to always acquiesce to their demands, but it does mean that you validate **them** as important so they know they are valued

When they do talk, are you truly listening to learn and help them navigate the situation, or are you just trying to tell them what to do so you don't have to deal with it in the moment

- The bonus of listening well is that they will feel loved and be more likely to share with you in the future

Now, every child is different, and listening isn't just about paying attention to the spoken messages, sometimes it's their behavior that speaks loudest – that's why you want to pay attention to any radical shifts

- As you watch them, are they suddenly struggling in school? Have they become anti-social? Are they hanging out with new friends you don't know more often? Are they sleeping during the day? Or do they have a quick trigger?
 - These are all indicators that something else may be going on
 - And I would say that it's not even always about investigating to find out **WHAT** is wrong as much as it is to find **WHY** things are wrong – the what is just a symptom
 - Don't treat your kids like they're under investigation, show them that you love them by taking time to listen

Bottom line, if you provide a safe place for them to share and take the time to listen, love and care for them, you'll go a lot further in the long run – remember you're in a marathon, not a sprint

Focus On Principals, Not Just Practices

I know that when we have different agendas, it can seem like it's impossible to find a road forward, but if you work at it, you will find common ground to build upon

- One of the reasons common ground can be hard is b/c we're focused on practices over principals – we focus on what instead of why
 - **(Ray)** I've mentioned on the show before that I have a control issue, and this comes to a head in that sometimes I don't just want my kids to do something, I want them to do it my way... you know, the best way
 - Maybe they aren't cleaning the way I would or maybe their eating too loudly or I don't understand why they dress the way they do, and so I start griping and it creates problems between us
 - I end up nagging them, and no one likes be nagged – you may get what you want in the moment, but it won't turn out well in the long run
 - As a parent, remember this: when you constantly fight over practices, you won't have the opportunity to instill the right principals

Give Away Authority (Not Just Tasks)

- This is a great leadership principal, but it's applicable to our kids as well, because the ultimate goal is to prepare them for adulthood, not just to behave in your home... remember that!
- As youth pastor, saw great kids who obeyed, but as they grew older, they didn't know how to navigate life
 - When we give our kids a checklist with everything on it that they can and can't do and instructions on how to do it all the way we like, they don't learn to think for themselves

When we give away authority, we give them permission to think

- Of course, this is age appropriate, but at some point, you want your kids to be able to reason for themselves and make wise decisions
- In fact, part of giving away authority is learning to let your kids fail

- Your kids need to know how to deal with hurt, with disappointment, with mistakes born out of their own failures
- Without the consequence of that pain, there is no growth
- In fact, **Psalm 73:26** says, **My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**
- Failure can actually be character building in the right setting

I don't know that I'd call this a complete failure, but not too long ago, our oldest was a part of our new youth worship team at church

- First few times leading, they practiced hard
- Well, I think they may have gotten a little overconfident & they struggled
 - We could see it coming, but after a while you have to back off and let them go
- They took it hard, but the good thing was that since then, we've seen our son really work hard to improve – failure made him better

Ray tends to give away authority more than me **(Carol)**

- Ray's like, send away on a trip to camp for a week or when they were younger, he'd say let's go out why they stay home – he didn't worry hardly at all
- For me, on the other hand, letting them go was difficult – I was afraid of what could happen (elaborate)

Of course, know your child and what they can handle. Let them fail, but help them fail forward. Don't let them get in dangerous places because you just want to give away authority, you have to still be responsible and wise.

We're going to give some tips that might help with some of the friction your facing, but if you have some things that have worked for you, make sure to drop a comment below or message us on Instagram – we'd love to hear from you!

TIPS

- Set up a time to talk and listen to your kids on a consistent basis – we did a whole episode about dinner time discussions that you can check out
- Practice the art of listening – maybe start by only asking questions and refusing to give your opinion for a set amount of time in a conversation
- Be inquisitive - ask your kids why they think you're having issues – they may not always know, but you can still learn a lot from listening
- Pray. Pray for them. Pray with them. Bring God into the equation and ask for wisdom – He wants to help you.
- Lastly, know that you can't completely eliminate friction and have a healthy relationship with your child – so don't get discouraged when you face it

ACTION STEPS

- Do something fun to connect with your child this month – not as a bribe, but sometimes when you're so at odds with each other, it's nice to get a breather – put it on the calendar and let them know!
- Write a letter to your child. In it, express your love for them – why do you love them, what about them do you love (not just accomplishments, but character traits) – let them see you care