Karen’s Kounsel

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KLynn Counseling

 a place for new beginnings

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**Let us make a special effort to stop communicating with each other, so we can have some conversation.**

[**Mark Twain**](http://www.searchquotes.com/quotes/author/Mark_Twain/)

In last month’s edition we talked about our kids, texting, and social media. This month is the continuation of that topic. I would like to address the most important concept of this whole issue: real, loving, relationship building communication with your child. In so many of our homes today, that has become a lost art. The human soul is created for communion with other people and with God. Spoken words have tremendous power. In the Bible God **spoke** creation into existence. In [**Proverbs 18:21**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+18:21&version=KJV) **it says,** **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue”.** Our major communication should not be relegated to brief inexact phrases like “LOL” or “ROFL”.

So where do we begin in our world of constant uncommunicative communication? Whatever you do decide to allow your child to participate in, be sure you stay in touch with what is going on. KNOW their friends – this should not be optional. Be extremely careful about chat rooms. No one really knows who they are interacting with. My first instinct is to say that chat rooms should be off limits. If you do decide to agree to this, please monitor what goes on. I have watched kids get sucked into some very frightening situations when they had no oversight. They only see the fun or excitement. They rarely realize that they are on a road filled with pitfalls and it would take very little for them to slide off the cliff. Breathtaking to look at, but do you really want to be speeding down it?



Here are some tips for lessening the time spent with these pursuits and building the real relationship that we all want to have with our children:

1. If things are out of control, start by taking the responsibility for yourself. We all respond more positively when someone says, “**I** have not paid enough attention to what has been happening” or “**I** have not been spending enough time with you” rather than, “**You** have been spending way too much time with this texting stuff” or “**You** have really let this get out of control.” The “you” statements may be the knee jerk reaction, but it is rarely the most productive. When we feel that something has slipped out of our control, it makes us more comfortable to try to immediately take back that control through the strongest means possible. The question is what will produce the most long lasting relational response?
2. Wherever you are in your relationship with your child start there. No relationship is so good that it can’t be enhanced, and no relationship is beyond repair. Start by looking for the strengths that ARE in your relationship with your child and build from that point. Are there common interests you share? Something you both enjoy doing? Something your child is interested in that you can become interested in? Start with that. Perhaps something as simple as a shopping trip to the mall or lunch together at their favorite restaurant. Do they like music, art, sports, reading? Going to an art gallery, a sports event, or asking them to loan you their favorite book would open up a door.
3. Another principle that you will find helpful in building your relationship with your child (or anyone else) is sharing. You need to give if you want to receive. If you want your child to share with you what is going on in his or her life, you should be willing to share your feelings, beliefs, and experiences with them. Share the warm memories and also share the hard times. Let me give you an example from my own life. When one of my daughters was young she encountered some bullying behavior from peers. I was pretty sure it was going on, but she was extremely reticent to talk about it. I finally realized that part of the problem was that she was embarrassed about the things they were saying to and about her. To ease this problem, I shared with her an experience I had as a teenager with bullying. She was stunned to know that her mom was actually a gawky stumbling kid who was made fun of at one time herself. It opened up a door of understanding and I was able to help her.

**“**[**This communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in half”.**](http://www.searchquotes.com/quotation/This_communicating_of_a_man%27s_self_to_his_friend_works_two_contrary_effects%3B_for_it_redoubleth_joys%2C/10929/) [**Aristotle**](http://www.searchquotes.com/quotes/author/Aristotle/)

1. The next step is to LISTEN. If you invite your children to share and communicate with you, then you have an obligation to really listen to what they are saying. It might not always be what you want to hear, wait until they are finished with what they have to say and then THINK before reacting. What is underneath the words you hear? Do they sound insecure? Just being unwise as all kids are? Being swept up in the crowd? Are they trying to tell you something and don’t know how? In another example, a child, who when asked to help out a particular family friend, became sullen and apparently “rebellious,” stubbornly refusing to comply. Because this was out of character, her mother, after initially being irritated, started trying to find out what was behind this behavior. It turned out that there was good reason for this refusal that was extremely difficult for the daughter to explain. Because the mom took the time to look further, a possibly very dangerous situation was avoided.
2. Major on the positive. All kids have strengths and inborn talents. Find them. Encourage them. Give them honest praise when they do well. Let them know that the differences that set them apart from some of their peers make them a unique individual. Quite frankly, most of the time it is good to not be just “one of the crowd.” Anyone who has accomplished anything worthwhile usually had to go against that “crowd.”.
3. This may sound like I do not support discipline, and that would not be accurate. As parents we have the duty and God given responsibility to stand firm, set boundaries, and hold to them, even when those boundaries are unpopular. **The key is to combine discipline with love. What we do, how we handle situations should always come from love. We don’t want our kids getting into trouble BECAUSE we love them. We want to communicate with them BECAUSE we love them. That needs to be the motivation behind our actions. If our discipline comes from anger, it produces more anger. God created the human heart to respond to love above all else. When what we say comes from a root of selfishness, fear, or anger, we end up sounding like the adults in the Charlie Brown cartoon. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal”.** [**1 Corinthians 13:1**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+13:1&version=KJV)

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