

30 years of having these parent meetings, this is the most important message.

The following message was communicated by a parent after the loss of their child.

My message is a message to the families of our community, to see that which we have seen, with the hope that we can change how we communicate and connect, for the sake of our children.

Love is Enough

Struggling to make sense of the departure, this message was shared to me,
“As well as you parents raised us, the advice you give us does not work”
.. implying that ours was a different time and our perspectives are not quite relevant today in their world.

And I had to agree. We grew up in times when we recreated for fun, things rolled off our backs, we called each other names and it was ok, you just let it roll and get on. If things did not work out, hey don't worry about it, just get on with it.

That advice may work in our own reference of the world, but it sure as heck doesn't work in their reference where kids are growing up in an era of high anxiety, hypersensitivity and cancel culture. Our ideals were built on a foundation of presence, of direct human interaction, of physically being there for one another. Theirs is built on emotionless virtualized representations of people... texts, posts, and chats. It's a completely different social paradigm from that which we grew up with.

As parents, we are experiencing an unprecedented sweeping social phenomenon no other generation has ever seen. Almost overnight with the advent of smartphones and social media, the entire social construct of how our children perceive themselves, and communicate to one another, and to us, has been upended. A massive chasm of communication has divided us with old legacy ideals on one side and modern-day ideals on the other. But to build this bridge back to our children, it takes more than just love. We have to change our references to match the world our children are living in.

I am challenging myself to rethink not only what I say to our adolescents, but how I say it and to hang on every word they tell you. Because I, a parent, may be the last person they want to talk to about some very important topics. It is quite possible they think I don't get them, and they could be right. And that has to change if we are to get back to relevance in our children's eyes.

I also have a message for the young adults of the world today. Please hear me out:

- You are better than you know.
- You are good enough, in fact you are way better than good enough.
- A single setback can be overcome. You are not alone. Take a deep breath and know your friends and family got you. We are your safety net and we love you dearly unconditionally.
- **Don't be perfect. It's okay not to be perfect. Nobody is perfect.**
- Reach out and be present for your friends. I'm talking about touching each other, high fives, secret handshakes, hugs or maybe just giving a call. Talk. Just connect to one another.
- Lastly,
 - your Phone is not your friend
 - your friend is your friend
 - a phone won't hug you back.
 - a phone will not cry with you.