

Parenting Teens Just Got Easier! is a free eZine for Parents of Teens

From Saso Seminars - by Patt and Steve Saso

How to Show Your Teen You Care – February 2009

By Steve Saso

Parenting Tip This Month: Sometimes teens seem to dismiss our expressions of love. Here are tips to show your teen you care.

Please pass on *Parenting Teens* to those in your network.

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February 2009 Featured Article
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How to Show Your Teen You Care

By Steve Saso

You can't go into any store and not be reminded that Valentine's Day is here.

Valentine's Day. A day for the little ones to pass out those cute, heart-shaped "Be Mine" cards. A day for buying flowers or candy for your sweetheart. A day for saying "I love you" to those we hold dear.

It's not so easy for many parents to say "I love you" to their teenagers.

It used to be easy, and come so naturally: "Good night, honey. I love you." Or "Have a good day at school today. I love you."

But when the kids morph into adolescents, those words are harder for some parents to utter.

It was for me. I would pass by Brian and Paul's room when they were teenagers. "Good night, boys. I...uh...I...well, sleep tight."

Somehow, looking at those hulking, teenage bodies gave me pause, and the words "I love you" got stuck in my throat.

It's bad enough uttering the L word in private, but imagine saying "I love you" to your teen in public.

Once at the high school where I taught a mom dropped her son off in the morning. She forgot to say "I love you." So she rolled down her window and shouted across campus, "I love you Johnny." John's friends mocked him all day: "I love you, Johnny! I love you, Johnny!"

So how can a parent of a teen say "I love you?"

Things to Remember

One thing is to realize that if we are brave enough to utter the L word to our teens, we probably won't get much of a response.

It's not that they don't appreciate our telling them we love them (in private), it's just that the awkwardness of the teenage years makes it hard for them to respond.

There was a time when my son was a senior in high school and I went into his room. I summoned up all my parental courage to say, "I love you, Brian." Brian grunted. He grunted! Oh, well, it was better than nothing, I suppose.

Another thing is to remember that all teenagers are different and some kids are comfortable with hearing the words, "I love you." Others are even good at saying it back. Our daughter Mikhaila, who is now almost 21, has never been hesitant about it.

Write a Note

For other teens, instead of saying the L word, try writing it. A couple of years ago, Patt wrote a love note to each one of our kids on Valentine's Day. Mikhaila, of course, wrote a love note back. And even though the boys did not acknowledge the note, we know it was important to them. I did the same thing last Christmas. Birthdays are another good time to write a love letter to our teens.

Do the Unexpected

Be creative. Stick a love note in your teen's school bag.

Write "I love" you with lipstick on the kids' bathroom mirror.

Humor is Always Good

A friend had another kind of love note from his teen written on the bathroom mirror. Getting ready to brush his teeth Greg looked up and saw: "Faces in this mirror are uglier than they appear."

So this Valentine's Day, along with the candy hearts and chocolate valentines, write your teens a love note. They may think it's stupid or silly or weird, but I guarantee you that your words of love will go straight to their hearts.

Check out our Parenting Tools for more help with parenting your teen.

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Patt & Steve Saso
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