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The Possibility of Unconditional Love Towards Teens

When a parent shows love, acceptance and compassion towards their children, they will be able to experience the love they wish they had received as a child growing up if they did not receive it from their parents. They will now experience receiving it from their child if unconditional love is all they know. Furthermore, studies have shown what happens when children do not experience this kind of affection. As a result, data suggests that unconditional love is one of the most influential aspects of young children's and adolescents' healthy development.

Research Context

Many children who experience tough love may come to believe that their family does not value them. Most parents overdo it when it comes to tough love, confronting their children's bad conduct out of a position of rage and shame rather than out of a place of love. This may also encourage them to turn to drugs for emotional support or to commit suicide. Not every children can withstand a confrontational approach; often the choice they make is motivated by insecurity, neglect, a lack of attention, or a sense that they don't measure up. Confronting your teen's inappropriate behavior should be done with compassion and understanding. If you need to set

limits or confront your adolescent about bad conduct, do it from a position of compassion and understanding in your heart. Also, make sure they are aware of the potential negative effects of their actions on them and those around them. Let your children revere you to the point where, when things go wrong, they feel safe knowing they can run to you and have confidence that you will accept them and not scare or embarrass them. Do not let your children fear you because you know you have authority or power over them. They won't feel confident asking for assistance from you and others even if they know that's what they need. Instill in them the belief that asking for assistance when required is acceptable.

The effects that tough love can bring. “The bigger picture suggests that tough love tends to backfire. My recent interviews confirm the findings of more formal studies. The Justice Department has released reports comparing boot camps with traditional correctional facilities for juvenile offenders, concluding in 2001 that neither facility “is more effective in reducing recidivism.” In late 2004, the National Institutes of Health released a “state of the science” consensus statement, concluding that “get tough” treatments “do not work and there is some evidence that they may make the problem worse.” Indeed, some young people leave these programs with post-traumatic stress disorder and exacerbations of their original problems.” (Maia Szalavitz pg 3). This demonstrates that using tough love as a training method for children(teenagers) is ineffective and unsuccessful. The distinctions between authoritative parenting and tough love are as follows: authoritative parenting teaches a child: love, confidence, and maturity, causes an improvement in their immune system, the ability to form healthy relationships, healthy brain development during childhood, and much more. While rigorous parenting, also known as tough love, has a negative impact on the child's physical, mental, and

emotional health to the point where the child needs to see a therapist to recuperate. “In contrast, conditional parenting gives children the message that they must earn their parents’ love.

Therefore, children feel they need to fulfill their parents’ expectations in order to receive their affection and approval. As a result, such children tend to exhibit anxiety and to question whether they are worthy of love, even when they reach adulthood.” (Newport Academy). Another issue with harsh love is that it makes children feel unlovable regardless of how well they perform academically and forces them to constantly seek acceptance. “The trouble with tough love is twofold. First, the underlying philosophy -- that pain produces growth -- lends itself to abuse of power. Second, and more important, toughness doesn't begin to address the real problem.

Troubled teenagers aren't usually "spoiled brats" who "just need to be taught respect." Like me, they most often go wrong because they hurt, not because they don't want to do the right thing.

That became all the more evident to me when I took a look at who goes to these schools.” (Maia Szalavitz pg 2)

Parenting your children authoritatively. Most individuals confuse authoritative parenting with strict (authoritarian) parenting. We shall examine the differences between these two kinds of parenting styles: Authoritative parenting is “Children or teens with a secure attachment know that their parents are emotionally available and responsive to take care of them. Therefore, they learn to trust and rely on others. In addition, they are better able to regulate their emotions and be their true self.” (Newport Academy). While the contrary, or authoritarian parenting: “Adults who did not receive love unconditionally as children are often very hard on themselves. In other words, they do not feel worthy of affection. Therefore, they find it difficult to forgive themselves for their mistakes and to accept themselves as they are. Consequently, this allows for an

authentic connection. Otherwise, they tend to be insecure, anxious, and fearful. This results in behaviors ranging from aggressive and demanding to clingy and dependent.” (Newport Academy)

However, some children can receive tough love, they use it as a step stone to do better in what they do. The higher performance in kids and teenagers can occasionally be the outcome of conditional affection and authoritarian parenting. “Over the past three years, I have interviewed more than 100 adolescents and parents with personal experience in both public and private programs and have read hundreds of media accounts, thousands of Internet postings and stacks of legal documents. I have also spoken with numerous psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists and juvenile justice experts. Of course there are a range of approaches at different institutions, but most of the people I spoke with agree that the industry is dominated by the idea that harsh rules and even brutal confrontation are necessary to help troubled teenagers. University of California at Berkeley sociologist Elliott Currie, who did an ethnographic study of teen residential addiction treatment for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, told me that he could not think of a program that wasn't influenced by this philosophy.” (Maia Szalavitz pg 1-2)

CONCLUSION

When it comes to unconditional love, those who experience it from their parents as children benefit by maturing, becoming self-assured, capable of creating true, secure bonds with others, learning self-compassion toward themselves, having strong, secure, and lovely bonds

with their parents, being able to rely on others, being able to control their emotions, and being their true selves, as well as growing and increasing in character development.

Works Cited

1. Szalavitz, Maia. "The Trouble With Tough Love." *Washingtonpost.com*, B01, forthcoming.
2. Staff, Newport Academy. "Unconditional Love: The Power of Loving Your Teen." *Newport Academy*, 14 Nov. 2022, www.newportacademy.com/resources/restoring-families/power-of-unconditional-love.