

Senior Advice: Never wait to strengthen family ties

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: Our close friends recently lost their 22-year-old son in an automobile accident. My husband tells me that the father has expressed strong guilt feelings because he had never been affectionate with his son. He also said he was sorry he had never told his son he loved him. The father said he was using the same parenting techniques his father used to raise him. He believed sons should grow up to be strong emotionally and physically, be protective, and always be in control. Both the father and mother of the young man who died are experiencing depression and guilt. This news has made my husband and I believe we should do better with our two sons. What are your suggestions?

A: The sense of grief can be overwhelming for the whole family when a child dies. Seldom does a parent truly get over the loss.

Because life can be short, remaining closely bonded to family and friends needs to be our highest priority. Yet we frequently become so busy in our day-to-day lives that we lose sight of this important fact.

Talk with your husband about your feelings and encourage him to share his feeling with you. It is a healthy thing to do.

Remember to give your sons regular hugs, and make it a point to understand their feelings and desires. Praise them for their successes and listen to their concerns. Put aside electronic toys to share time and values. You learn more about each other when you stay involved in their activities.

As individuals, we need to remember how important it is to communicate our love through words and touch. Make it a habit to tell your sons how much you love them and how proud you are to be their parents. Mothers and daughters are able to do this more comfortably. Fathers and sons should do the same.

When you express your love to someone else, you receive a similar response. Through this process, husbands, wives and children all become winners!

Q: I have found two good friends who are also widowed. One enjoys a happy and outgoing attitude. The other thrives on every piece of bad news. My positive friend and I like her and want her to lighten up so she will be happier. How can we help?

A: I would recommend that you encourage your negative friend to become a committed volunteer. There are

so many positive experiences that come from helping others. If you and your positive friend already volunteer, take your negative friend along. If not, find a charity that really needs you and make it a threesome.

Volunteers often change in a positive way when they see how others cope with life's problems. Volunteers see for themselves how much need there is in the world, which helps them to see their own good fortune.

Other rewards that come volunteering include finding a purpose, becoming involved, using acquired skills in a productive new way, positively affecting a child's future, and helping to improve the world around us. The list of benefits goes on and on! Where else could you find better incentives to brighten your relationships?

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