

Parents: Turn Today's Headlines into Teachable Moments

Excerpt from Aim for Success by Lori Kuykendall

How can parents turn these troubling headlines into teachable moments with their children?

1. **Use wisdom and courage in answering tough questions.** Even just passing through the living room with the morning TV news on can generate questions on difficult issues. Don't fear the questions- but rather be ready with a calm and confident response. You want to be the key information source for your child. You want to be the "expert"- the one they come to with all their questions like this.

- Start by affirming the ask-er. "I'm so glad you asked me that. You can always ask me questions like that." (If you'll practice that response, and say it every time, it buys you a few seconds to come up with the next reply!). If you panic and tell the child, "Go ask your Dad" or "Go ask your Mom"- you are discouraging the next question they have.
- Ask a clarifying question. "Well, what do you think that means?" Assess what they already know on the subject and listen for any misconceptions. Get a starting point from your child, then you'll know how to build on their current understanding.
- Consider the age of the ask-er. A five-year-old answer should be very different than a twelve-year-old answer. Be as honest as you can for their maturity level, being careful not to give information that is beyond their understanding. Keeping in mind also that the information you share is likely to be shared at the school lunch table the next day.

2. **Share your family's values on these important life issues.** Your children care what you're thinking, so process through some of the different perspectives that you're hearing and circle back to your family's perspectives.
3. **Capitalize on the opportunity to grow your parent-child relationship.** It is talking that grows your parent-child relationship, which serves as a protective factor for a whole host of risk-taking behaviors. Keep the channels of communication open, and you will find the turbulent teen years to be less turbulent, and in turbulent times in our nation, your family will find strength from within.