

The Home Lives of Young People

A parent can put food on the table and provide clothes for the child, yet not provide even a fraction of what the young person really needs, which is to be liked as he or she is, to be valued, to be treated as a person with feelings.

A teacher can provide a desk, a textbook, and even clear instruction on the board, yet not provide even a fraction of what the young person really needs, which is to be liked as he or she is, to be valued, to be treated as a person with feelings.

A young person may break certain rules in the home, and a consequence may be in order. A parent can dole out punishment, but if it is delivered harshly or without connection or compassion, no learning will take place. The distance between the parent and the child will increase, and the child will simply work harder to hide the behavior from the parent when it is repeated.

A young person may break certain rules in the classroom, and a consequence may be in order. A teacher can dole out discipline, but if it is delivered harshly or without connection or compassion, no learning will take place. The distance between the teacher and the student will increase, and the student will simply work harder at hiding the behavior from the teacher when it is repeated.

A parent may not be able to provide the nicest home on the block, the kind of clothes the child would like to wear, or the freedom that the parent of a friend may allow. If, however, that parent will look at the child when he or she is speaking, listen for the feelings behind the words, and respond with honesty, kindness, and encouragement, the child will feel what he needs to feel. If the parent will guide with a gentle hand, speak with a careful tongue, and apologize when mistakes are made, the child will learn what he needs to learn and a deep respect for the parent will continue to grow.

A teacher may not be able to provide the best resources in town, the kind of lessons that ignite fires in the mind, or even the personality another teacher may possess. If, however, that teacher will look at the student when he or she is speaking, listen for the feelings behind the words, and respond with honesty, kindness, and encouragement, the student will become prepared to face the world outside the classroom. If the teacher will respectfully address behavior, speak with a careful tongue, and apologize when mistakes are made, the student will learn to see himself as worthy of respect and a deep respect for the teacher will continue to grow.

Perhaps there was a time when one home was enough, but there has never been, nor will there ever be, a time when multiple homes full of kindness and respect will be too much. The classroom is not the world outside of the home where a young person must face the hard realities of life. It is a second home; and for some young people it is the only home in which they can grow to the point where they may one day be capable of facing the world outside.

--Aaron Boe

