

WHEN YOUR KIDS WON'T TALK TO YOU

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Never in a million years would you imagine that the adorable bundle you had in your arms so many years ago would no longer speak to you. You loved them, nourished them, sheltered and protected them. You gave them an education and encouraged them to succeed. You may have given them a spiritual education and you prayed for them regularly. You gave them some great memories and spent truckloads of money on them. And now they refuse to communicate with you. What went wrong?

There are so many reasons kids, whatever age they may be, won't talk to their parents. I believe that the greatest reason is when parents divorce or separate. Often kids feel conflicted and sometimes blame one parent for the breakdown. Then there are the parents, that when this happens, poison their kids against the other parent. If young and indoctrinated enough, children may grow up to hate the non-custodial parent and want nothing to do with them. I know a few parents who have gone through bouts of depression because they have never had any communication with their children despite many attempts to do so. They have been blocked at every turn by their ex-spouse.

Last week I was counseling a man whose wife left him for about the 4th time in nine years to have relationships with other men. When these affairs failed she would come back to her husband and he would take her back. That is until the last time when he put his foot down and said, "No more!" His wife now calls and asks to speak to the 9 and 7 year-old boys. The father calls out and says, "Your mother would like to talk to you." The reply is always, "Well, I don't want to talk to her!"

Some people think that they can live their selfish, narcissistic lives and expect everybody else to fit in around them. In fact, they can get quite affronted when things don't go their way. These boys are very hurt as it's not the first time their mother has abandoned them. She has made no attempt to seek custody of them, so the boys can figure out where they stand with her.

Another reason why kids won't talk to parents is when they have been the center of the universe. Spoiled and demanding, they still want everything to go their own way even into adulthood. If the indulgent parent says no, after realizing their child has been manipulating them for years, all hell can break loose. They throw an child-like tantrum and refuse to talk to you.

Physical, emotional, social, and sexual abuse of children by a parent as well as substance abuse by one or both parents can build up huge walls of fear, hatred and unwillingness to communicate. There are parents who work long hours and lose themselves in their business only to find that they have no

relationship with their children. Problems with wills and money can cause some people to never talk to family members again. Then there are some petty things that some emotionally unstable or controlling people want to get uptight about. I could go on.

It is tragic not to have a relationship with your kids. I have found the best solution is to sincerely apologize whether you feel you are in the right or not. By apologizing you free yourself from the problem and hopefully the animosity between you will dissipate. Life is far too short to be out of communication with your children. Some people say, "But you don't understand. I am so deeply wounded." To be perfectly blunt, get over yourself. You are the older person and need to initiate any restorative action. If you feel it is too complex seek professional help. I have given this advice to numerous people who now have restored relationships.

If you are a person with kids who won't talk to you, I empathize with you. It has to be difficult. Often we have been the cause of the problem anyway, whether in a subtle or open way. Reach out to your child. Pray about the situation and about your apology. I have found that writing a letter seems to be the best way of apologizing. May you have strength and courage to make that first move!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.