

## Parenting By Asking Questions

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## Parenting By Asking Questions

David Augsburger, author, and educator. said, "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable." Learning to ask questions and really listen to what our child says is an incredible parenting tool. It is important for us to listen, not to respond with our own ideas or opinions, but to understand what lies behind the words. With practice, this can lead us to place of empathy and greater connection.

Asking guiding questions instead of telling a child what to do empowers them to begin to solve their own problems, creates cooperation instead of resistance, shares the control and helps to develop self-efficacy and ownership. Notice how this plays out in the scenario with four-year-old Alex and his mom.

- "Alex, honey. You still have your slippers on, and we have to go to school. The car leaves in 5 minutes."
- "I like my Mickey Mouse slippers, Mama. I want to wear them to school."
- "I know you like them, Sweetie. How do you think your slippers will work in the classroom?"
- "Great"
- "How do you think they'll work when you go outside for recess?"
- "Oh" (He thinks about this for a bit. His mom is quiet and doesn't say a word, giving Alex time to think.) "I gotta change into my tennis shoes, Mama. But can I pack my slippers in my backpack?"
- "Sure, honey. Car leaves in four minutes."

Guided questions have the purpose of supporting younger children towards making important choices without coercion or creating a power-struggle.

With teenagers and young adults, asking open-ended questions with no agenda and no right answer leads to greater communication. They can be asked in a non-judgmental way and are conducive to dialog. They keep us from telling our teenage or adult children what to do. Asking, "Don't you think this is the best job for you?" isn't really a question. It is giving an opinion in the guise of a question. An open-ended question is one that we don't already know the answer to. It comes from a place of curiosity and openness. It might be something like:

- "Which of the job opportunities seems to most aligned with your career goals?"
- "Tell me about your new job--what is it like?"
- "I was impressed how you managed your sister's criticism? How did you remain so calm?"
- "It must be hard to balance school and your job. What helps you to keep going?"
- "Tell me more about your job--what is the most exciting/boring part? How are your co-workers?"
- "Recently, I was looking at some photos of your grandparents. I am wondering what your favorite memories are of them?"

So much can be learned by simply sitting with someone and listening to their experiences without interrupting or offering solutions or judgment. We can always ask, "Is there more about that?" giving them permission to go deeper. Often, what our children are seeking is to be seen, heard, and loved.

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