

Dispensers of Hope

An important gift we can give our teens is to teach them about the concept of balcony people. Balcony people are those who, living and dead, show us we can live above the petty and discordant levels of life and who give us hope, suggests Ross Campbell, author of *How to Really Love Your Teen*. Balcony people are those who we can trust wholeheartedly and admire. They are the ones we know will love us no matter what.

Of course, we want to be balcony people for our own children, and we can be. However, teens are very sensitive to pessimism, especially from their parents. Sometimes we are pessimistic about our children in one way or another, in addition to being pre-occupied with our own personal challenges. As parents, we are sometimes puzzled about what our teens really need from us, as well.

Our young people need balcony people to counter the cellar voices that come from the 'basement' of their lives . . . rash temper, boiling anger, vindictive feelings. Cellar voices also come from the effects of those around them who, because of their own guilt, frustration, pent up hostility and low self-esteem, cut others down and tell them how bad the world really is.

An important aspect of parenting is to prepare children for life outside the home, to introduce people and experiences that broaden children's horizons and introduce them to their own abilities, those who can assist them in developing skills to get along in the world. One way to do this is to be sure they have others, outside the family, to whom they can look to for inspiration and instruction, and whom they can trust. These could be called balcony people.

And where are the best places to find balcony people for our children? They may be relatives, neighbors, those in our church congregations, teachers, coaches, school administrators or family friends. God has placed so many among us who can be balcony people for our children.

First, we need to build confidence and trust in our children's lives so they can be open to the influence of other positive people. We need to be sure that our children are in environments where they can come to really know other adults and develop relationships with them. They also need to understand, from a Biblical perspective, that there have always been people who are loyal to God's Word and who have served Him. During family worship, exploring verses such as Romans 8:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Isaiah 41:10 and Psalms 34:19 can be a powerful part of this journey. Hebrews 11 is a roll call of people who proved that faith is workable in spite of circumstances and that life can have meaning any time in history.

Most of us learn from our own experiences, but it takes a wise person to learn from the experiences of others. Our teens face an uncertain world. They need hope, confidence, courage, moral strength and a sense of responsibility. Balcony people can provide these things. They are the dispensers of hope in an uncertain world!

REFLECT

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Too often we forget that our fellow laborers are in need of strength and cheer. Take care to assure them of your interest and sympathy. Help them by your prayers, and let them know that you do it. E White, Ministry of Healing, pp. 492, 493

By giving their children love, sympathy, and encouragement at home, parents may provide for them a safe and welcome retreat from many of the world's temptations. E White, Adventist Home, p. 185

TAKE ACTION

Teach your child the concept of balcony people, sharing about the people who have been balcony people to you. Appropriately, you can also share how cellar voices have affected you. Invite them to share with you who the balcony people are in their life. Inviting them to share who are the cellar voices should be met with a listening, encouraging ear. This is not a time to discuss or solve problems, but to share what's on hearts.

LEARN MORE

How to Really Love Your Teenager, Ross Campbell, David C. Cook, 2004