

Strengths-based communications help parents develop stronger line of communications with adolescents

November 14 2019, by Alicia Rohan



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Parents and teens do not have the same memory about how often parents are talking to the teen about the teen's strengths and weaknesses. Parents

often think they talk more about strengths than weaknesses, but teens think parents talk more about weaknesses than strengths, according to a University of Alabama at Birmingham study published in *Applied Developmental Science*.

The relationship of communications about strengths suggests that strengths-based communication may be a better indicator of the overall parent-adolescent relationship than critical or weakness-based communication.

"Our research results are in line with previous positive psychology research that has been done with teachers and coaches in the classroom and in sports," said Emma Goodman, lead author and a recent graduate of the UAB College of Arts and Sciences Department of Psychology doctoral program. "We didn't find that weaknesses were related, other than teens tend to remember their parent discussing them more than their strengths, suggesting teens are sensitive to that kind of feedback."

The study compared how often parents and teens discussed strengths and weaknesses alongside how well the two communicate, how much the [teen](#) discloses to the parent, and how close the parent and teen were. Talking about strengths was more associated with better outcomes on these other measures, and not talking about strengths was associated with worse outcomes on these other measures.

According to the study, the frequency of communication about strengths, but not weaknesses, was associated with parent-adolescent general communication, adolescent disclosure and relationship quality. Reports of strengths conversations were more consistent than those conversations about weaknesses, suggesting that adolescents might remember the "sting" of conversations about weaknesses more readily than parents.

In addition to parents making intentionally hurtful or insensitive

comments, well-meaning messages may be getting lost in translation as well, according to researchers.

"Providing balanced and constructive feedback for adolescents is likely a difficult line for many [parents](#) to walk," Goodman said. "However, the frequency of communication about strengths have unique and meaningful contributions to [relationship](#) quality, general [communication](#) and disclosure."

Goodman said future research is needed to fully understand the complex relations and their influence on developmental outcomes.

More information: Emma S. Goodman et al. Frequency of communication about adolescents' strengths and weaknesses and the parent–adolescent relationship, *Applied Developmental Science* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2019.1594813](https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2019.1594813)

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

Citation: Strengths-based communications help parents develop stronger line of communications with adolescents (2019, November 14) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-11-strengths-based-parents-stronger-line-adolescents.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--